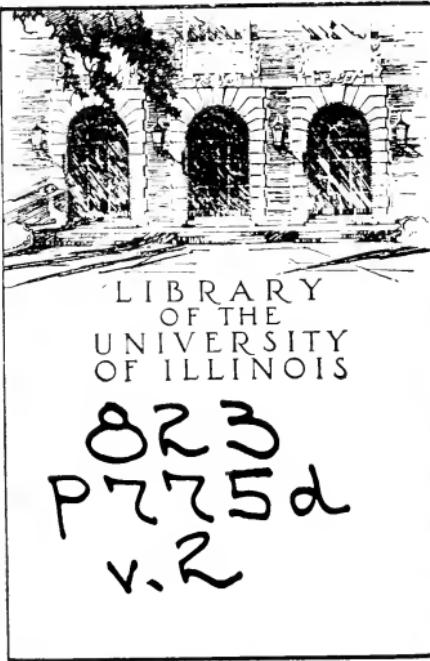
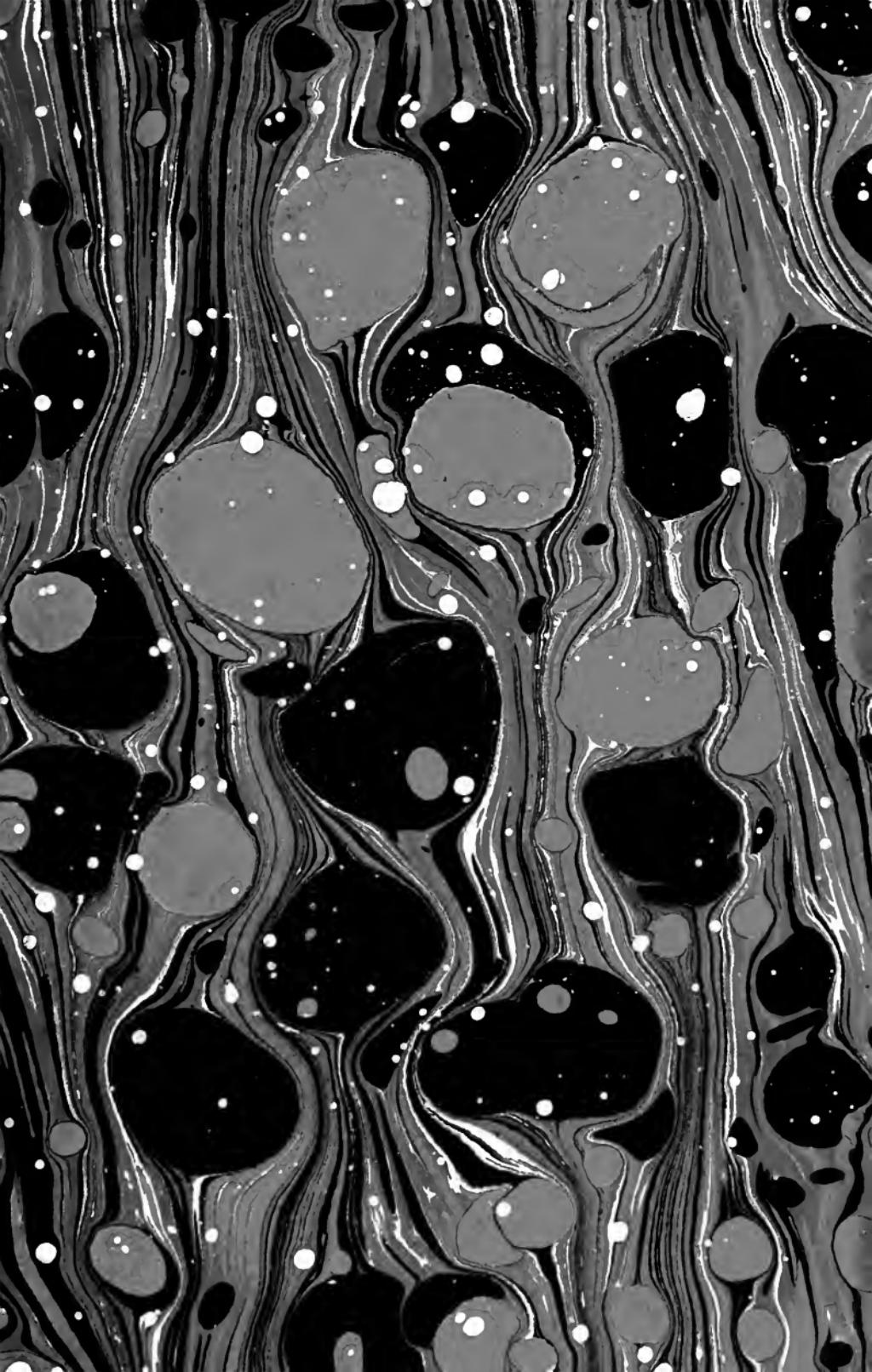


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THE
DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

Not enjoyment, and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way ;
But to act that each to-morrow
Find us further than to-day.

In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle—
Be a hero in the strife !

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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ISABEL DENISON.

(CONTINUED.)

'Tis an old tale, and often told.

Marmion.

THE
DISCIPLINE OF LIFE.

ISABEL DENISON.

(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER XXVI.

As one by one thy hopes depart,
Be resolute and calm.

Oh! fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know, ere long—
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.

LONGFELLOW.

A week had passed since Clarence's return to England.

He sate in the drawing-room, with Isabel, professing to read to her, while she was drawing, but the book had made little progress.

“Have you heard yet from Herbert Grey?”

he asked, laying down, for about the fifth time, the book he held in his hand.

“No,” said Isabel, sadly; “I wrote to him that very night, and yesterday, or even before that, I might have heard from him. It makes me very, very miserable.”

“Perhaps he will come and see you, instead of writing.”

“Perhaps he may—I almost wish he would.” After a moment’s silence, she continued, “I suppose it is a good thing to have something to cloud one’s happiness. If it was not for this, I might be too happy now. I believe I might think that earth was passed, and Heaven had begun,”—and she turned her beautiful eyes on Clarence with such an expression of devotion—“but now, whenever I am alone, I have such fearful thoughts of remorse and self-reproach. I forget them when I am with you; but, when you are away, they are always with me. Sometimes I can hardly bear them.”

“But, surely, you are wrong, dear Isabel—surely, this need not now be?”

“ I don’t know ; it seems to me that I ought not to be so very happy, when I have made him unhappy—when I know he is unhappy still.”

A servant came in with a card on a tray, and took it to Isabel.

“ I told the gentleman that you were engaged, ma’am, but he insisted on my bringing up the card.”

She turned very pale, but desired that he might be shown into the back drawing-room.

“ He is come—Herbert is come,” she said, turning to Clarence ; “ and now I feel as if I wished the earth to cover me.”

“ Don’t tremble so, dear Isabel. I am very glad he is come ; I am sure it will make you feel happier afterwards.....Do go to him at once ; you will only get nervous, if you sit there thinking.”

She got up, and walked slowly across the room.

“ I will stay here,” said Clarence. “ I should like so much to see him, Isabel. Do you think it possible he would see me ?”

Isabel shook her head, as, with a violent effort, she opened the door of the next room, and went in.

Herbert was standing, with his arms folded, before a picture of Isabel; but, as she entered, he went quickly towards her, with a kind smile, and shook her hand.

She said nothing, but sate down on the sofa, and slightly moved a chair towards him.

“I am come to you, Miss Denison, because your letter gave me pain, and I thought I might better answer it by word than by writing. You must not write to me in that way, Isabel. Forgive me if I still call you by that name; I shall soon learn to change it now.” He spoke perfectly calmly, but there was a sad tone in his voice.

Isabel attempted to smile, but tears forced their way instead.

“I must not have this, dear Isabel. Why this self-reproach, this self-condemnation? Even if I ever could have blamed you, you have acted so nobly, you have suffered so much, that I must have forgiven you. But

you know I never did, never could blame. You must forgive yourself now, dearest Isabel.” He looked imploringly in her face.

“ I would—I think that I could, if you were not what you are, Herbert. If you had not so truly loved me—if you would but reproach me! This is what breaks my heart—to think it possible that I could forget you.”

“ You did not forget me. I have wished so much to say this to you. I see it so plainly now, though it did not strike me at first. You never really loved me. Do not think,” he continued, anxiously, “ that I doubt your affection for me; I know it was great—I think it is so still; but affection is not love. You did not know then what love was, and you thought you loved me. It came afterwards; you learned it then. It was most natural, dear Isabel; I see it now; and, if I would, I could not blame you.”

Isabel said nothing, made no remark, but gave a deep sigh of relief. It was what she had often said to herself, but none but Herbert had ever made this excuse for her.

“Are you happy now, Herbert?” she said, at last, looking earnestly in his face.

The word grated on his feelings, and he could not say yes. “Do not fear for me, Isabel; my life is not gloomy now, as it was before I knew you. You have taught me better things.”

“Have I taught you to pity error and sin?” she asked, with a sad, sad smile.

“Yes, and to trust in truth and virtue as well,” he almost passionately added. But the momentary emotion passed, and he continued, calmly, “I have many pleasures, many interests; I have indeed; and one bright spot in the past, which, believe me, Isabel, sheds its light upon my pathway still.”

“You will not—can you not say that you are happy?” she persisted. “Will you not, at least, say that you will be happy?”

A faint colour tinged his cheek, and he was silent before he answered her.

“Happy, Isabel—what we call happy—I believe few can be, who have suffered, who have seen the veil withdrawn from the world’s

fair promise. Even you, dearest, in the union of your perfect love, may not know what unclouded happiness is; but happy we each shall be, each in our degree, if we strive to the uttermost to fulfil the duties that are laid upon us day by day."

The glance she cast upon him was so little like unclouded happiness, that he dared not trust himself to say more, but rose abruptly. "You will promise me to forgive yourself, dear Isabel? I cannot be satisfied without that."

"Never, Herbert." She was not deceived. Through all the calm and gentle kindness of his manner, she saw the tokens of the love she had rejected, of the heart she had broken.

"Have I then come all this way in vain? Do you refuse me the pleasure to think I have been useful to you?"

"Not in vain, Herbert. You have comforted me; and, if it were possible, I would try to tell you all the gratitude I feel; but I cannot."

He gently pressed her hand, then held it for an instant, and she rose. "I shall have one request to make to you, and I know that you will not refuse it to me. Not to-day; — you shall hear from me in a short time about it; and now, Isabel, God bless you!" He let go her hand, but in a moment took it again. "There is one thing more I would say," he began, in a hesitating voice, and the colour rose to his cheek. "Your husband, when he is your husband, must not quarrel with, must not be jealous of, my love for you. Believe me, it is but that you will have one friend more, who will never cease to pray for the happiness of you both. Will you tell him so, from me?" Again he pressed her hand, and let it go; but Isabel stood still, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

"Might I see Lord Clarence, dearest Isabel? They told me, down stairs, that he was here. If he would not mind it, it would be a great pleasure to me."

She raised her eyes, streaming with tears, from the ground, and turned them upon him

with an expression of gratitude which almost repaid him for all.

In a few moments, Clarence came into the room, and the rivals met. No word was spoken on either side ; but Herbert smiled, kindly and calmly, as he shook the hand of him who had robbed him of that which was dearest to him on earth. And they parted again.

“ It is done,” said Herbert Grey, with a sigh of relief, as the house-door closed, and he walked rapidly away.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A school for Scandal—tell me, I beseech you,
Needs it a school that modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now—the knowing think
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.

GARRICK.

“ But are you quite sure, Laura ? ” said Mrs. Franklin to her sister.

“ Yes, quite sure. Mr. Price told me he had just seen Miss Shepherd.”

“ It’s very strange,” said Mrs. Franklin, musing: “ I always thought she would have married Mr. Grey. What are you doing, sir ? Oh ! you naughty little boy ! ” and she lifted from the ground a small monster, with a ball of brown worsted in its mouth.

“ Here comes Matilda Bridges. I sent to say that I wanted to speak to her ; for I would not lose the sight of her face when she

hears the news for the whole world. Good gracious! what fun it will be!"

"Well, Laura," said Miss Bridges, as she came bustling in, "what did you want me for?"

"To see Elizabeth and her little boy, of course; I knew you would like it."

"Oh!" remarked Miss Bridges, looking extremely disconcerted.

"Besides that, I wanted to know if you'd heard the news."

"I hear a great deal of news," said Miss Bridges, languidly; "but I don't trouble myself to remember it."

"Oh! then I dare say you know my news, so I won't tell you. Isn't this a fine little boy?" and she pinched the pudding cheeks of the young heir of the Franklins.

"I suppose you mean about Mr. Bennett; but what do I care whether he goes or stays?"

"Oh! no; I am tired, too, of hearing that Mr. Bennett is going. My news is great news, about Miss Denison."

Miss Bridges fidgeted, and curiosity tri-

umphed over temper. “Now, Laura, don’t be provoking. If you have got anything to tell, why can’t you tell it at once?”

“Well, then—what do you think?—Miss Denison is going to be married!”

“She is, at last, is she?—I am sure, with the opportunities she has had, I should be quite ashamed to have been Miss Denison for so long. And so, she’s going to take up with Mr. Grey at last, I suppose?”

“Oh! no, Matilda, not Mr. Grey! Now, prepare,—she is actually going to be married to a Lord—Lord Clarence Broke—the son of the Duke of ——!”

Miss Bridges sate aghast. This exceeded her very worst anticipations. “Well, I declare,” she said, at last, lifting up her hands and eyes, with a look of virtuous indignation, “if it is not enough to make one ashamed of the name of woman! I could not have believed it, even of her!”

“Why, Matilda, I don’t see what you have got to say against it. You always did say—and this shows that you were right, and what

a good judge you were—that there never was anything between her and Mr. Grey.” Laura took away her comfort in her misery, and she knew it.

But Miss Bridges was not slow to find another direction in which to vent her spite.

“ I declare it’s enough to make one sick. While she was an heiress, she gave herself the airs of a princess. Now—she’s willing to take up with anybody.”

“ I must say, Matilda,” said Laura, laughing loudly, “ that you are much the most ill-natured girl that I ever met with in the whole course of my life.”

“ Ill-natured?—Why, it’s as clear as day. I have always read Miss Denison pretty plainly, and she knows it—but, I confess that even I am surprised. It makes one sick to think of—I could register a vow against marriage, all the days of my life, after hearing this.”

Mrs. Franklin was roused by this vehemence. The time was past when the jealousies of Matilda Bridges could interest her matronly mind. She had wandered far away in dreams,

not of romance, but the more substantial visions of household concerns—joints of meat, a declining store-cupboard, a necessary new jacket for the page, and a new cot for the increasing dimensions of Master Frederick. She now looked up, however. “Don’t talk so, Matilda—I can’t bear to hear people say such things. You don’t know how happy it is to be married!” and she kissed her young monster, with great affection.

“I dare say it is very happy, for those who like it, and I’m sure I hope Miss Denison will be happy—though I can’t say I think it likely. But I do trust I may never be troubled with the sight of her again.”

“Oh, yes, you will! That was some other news I heard, but Mr. Price told me particularly not to mention it. Lord Clarence thinks of buying the old manor house. It will be very nice for you, Matilda, for you are always wishing for superior company, and now you will see Lady Clarence Broke driving by every day. Lady Clarence Broke—was there ever such a sweet name! And, I dare say, she will

have a pony phaeton, with two ponies—at least, that's what I should have if I was a Lady."

Miss Bridges was silent; she was paralyzed by the blow.

" Won't it be nice, Matilda? I don't know how ever we shall leave this window! Such gowns she'll have—such bonnets, such parasols, we never shall be tired of looking at her!"

" It's just what I expected," said Miss Bridges, spite at last struggling to the surface; " it's very little to be a lady, but here she must come, with her airs and her dignity. I should like to be caught—yes, I should extremely like to see myself gratifying her nasty pride by looking at her! She had better stay away, if that's what she's coming for."

" I'll bet you twenty pounds down, Matilda, that I catch you looking at her the very first day."

This conversation soon ended; but it may be gratifying to my readers to anticipate a few months, and to be informed that when Lord and Lady Clarence Broke came down to

take possession of the improved and beautified Manor House, Miss Bridges was seen, with her whole body out of Mrs. Chapman's window, watching the pretty britzschka, as it passed through Ellerton.

On that occasion, however, she made but one remark—"I only thank my goodness that there is not a coronet on the carriage!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Ange si pur
Que dans un songe j'ai cru trouver :
Triste mensonge,
Envolez vous et pour jamais.

Romance.

It was the day before Isabel's wedding-day. Mr. Denison had taken a pretty suite of rooms, for the whole of the Shepherd family, whom he had invited to London for the marriage, in an hotel, near Grosvenor Square.

Rachel and Mrs. Shepherd arrived on the evening of the last day. Miss Shepherd had resisted Isabel's earnest entreaties to come sooner. She had long since forgiven Mr. Denison, but she felt that it would be painful to them both to meet. She felt, too, that she, and still more, her aunt, were unsuited to the society in which Isabel naturally lived. Mrs.

Jones had been lately confined, to Mrs. Shepherd's great surprise, and Mr. Jones was too good a husband to leave his wife, when she was not well: but Amy Jones, now a pretty girl of eleven years old, came up, at Isabel's special request, to be one of the two bridesmaids.

Isabel walked with Clarence, to spend a part of the evening with her aunt, and her father was to fetch her home again.

Mr. Denison had dreaded this interview more than he liked to own, even to himself; but now, when he and Rachel Shepherd met, on this last evening of Isabel's unmarried life, the hearts of both were so full of her, that all feelings of reproach, on the one hand, and remorse on the other, were forgotten.

They met calmly, though gravely. Mr. Denison talked, for some time, with great kindness, both to her and Mrs. Shepherd, then called his daughter, and they went home together.

“Good night, Isabel,” said Rachel, smiling fondly upon her.

“ Good night, my dear,” said old Mrs. Shepherd ; “ you look as white and calm as a lily. Bless me ! I remember, now, the flutter I was in the night before I was married ; but I suppose every thing is changed now-a-days.”

The day of Isabel’s marriage dawned, at last.

Herbert Grey arrived early in the morning, and breakfasted with Mrs. and Miss Shepherd, at the hotel. He had asked to be allowed to perform the marriage service for Isabel, and his request had been granted.

It might seem strange, that he should have wished it to be so. Many might have wondered that he could bear to speak those words, which would give her—so wildly loved, so passionately regretted—to another ; and, to many, it might have been a pain too great even to think of : but the wish was consistent with Herbert’s character.

He had loved her with no common love ; it was a deeper, higher, holier feeling than it is often a woman’s fate to be loved with ; and

now that she was lost to him, it was a pleasure—a pleasure even in its agony—himself to bind that chain which, while it separated them more entirely, would, he trusted, make her happy for ever. He felt, too, that it would disperse, more than all else, any lingering feeling of distrust, in his own mind, or in the minds of Clarence and Isabel, as to the nature of his feelings for her. If he could bear, himself, to speak the words that gave her to another—if his hand could firmly clasp those hands which never were to be put asunder—surely they need not fear, surely he need not dread, that in the love he still was forced to bear her, there was the least taint of envy, or jealousy, or earthly feeling.

Clarence had wondered at the request, but Isabel understood it. She felt that, under the same circumstances, she might have done the same. There was a strange likeness between her and Herbert—a likeness so great perhaps as to have prevented that love which is almost always deepest and strongest when excited by a contrast. The rule, of course, is

not without exceptions ; but Herbert's case was not, as some might think, one of those exceptions. There existed the strongest contrast between him and Isabel, although the same was not apparent between Isabel and him. There was a lightness and brightness over the surface of her nature, which had gladdened him like a perpetual sunshine ; but the brightness was on the surface ; the grave and melancholy depths of her heart had found a response in him, and it was an echo too true to be otherwise than oppressive. Her nature needed, like Herbert's, a brighter than its own to lean upon ; and it was in this that the magic influence, which Clarence had at once exercised over her affections, consisted.

Herbert Grey was perfectly calm as he sat at breakfast, but grave and silent, and Miss Shepherd remarked, with pain, the unnatural paleness of his cheek, and a strange, compressed look about his mouth, which bespoke a deep suffering within. She followed him to the window, as he left the breakfast table.

“Are you not deceiving yourself, Herbert?” she asked, anxiously; “have you not taken upon yourself a task beyond your strength? Forgive me, for intruding my advice; but I fear for you, and it is not yet too late to change.”

“Thank you, very much, for your kind interest in me,” he answered, in a voice which, calm as it was, wrung her heart by its sadness; “but you need not fear. I would not have undertaken it, if I had not been sure of myself. You may be sure I would not run the risk of agitating Isabel.”

The marriage was to be a very private one; none but the immediate friends and relations on both sides were to be present. This had been Isabel’s only care concerning it.

All the company had assembled in the vestry of St. George’s church. Isabel arrived the last, with Mr. and Mrs. Denison. They were detained, for a few minutes, in the vestry, all but Herbert, who dared not trust himself to hear, or to speak to Isabel.

When all was ready, he came from the church, to announce it to Mr. Denison. As he stood, for an instant, in the doorway, his eyes fell on Isabel in her bridal dress. She was looking strangely beautiful—with her downcast eyes and marble cheeks, and long flowing veil, more like an angel from Heaven than a bride of earth. For an instant, Herbert turned away his face, drew a deep breath, then again looked calmly upon her, and led the way to the altar.

The service began; there were many spectators, for the church was crowded to excess by those whom curiosity had brought, although the invited guests were few; but a remarkable silence and attention prevailed amongst them all. All seemed to feel that there was something unusually sad, unusually solemn, as the tones of that deep and touching voice fell upon their ears. Many wept bitterly. Mr. and Mrs. Courteney blew their noses till they were quite purple, and yet they could not tell what it was that affected them so deeply.

Mr. Denison and Rachel Shepherd stood side by side, and their calm, strong natures—so different in the tempests within, so alike in the quietness without—were thrilled by some unwonted emotion; and even the brow of Clarence, the happy, happy Clarence, was touched with sorrow, and his bright eyes were, for an instant, brighter with tears, as he led his bride, his wife, his long-loved—at last, his own—Isabel, from the altar.

Once only, the voice of Herbert had faltered. It was when he guided the lips of Clarence to take her “for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death should them part.” Perhaps the time had been when, in his lonely wanderings, his own heart had addressed her in those beautiful and touching words.

The service was over. They returned to the vestry, and the names were signed. Herbert and Isabel stood side by side, but no word was spoken between them. From the great crowd without, there was a delay in the appearance of the carriage. Mr. Denison

forced his daughter to sit down, but placed her near the door, that she might be ready.

Her husband approached her. "The carriage is come: will you go now, Isabel?" For a moment his eye wandered to the figure of Herbert, who still stood motionless where the signatures had been made. He longed to speak one word of kindness, but even kindness a happy rival dares not show, and he turned again to Isabel.

She got up; then, with a hurried step, went to Herbert's side.

"Herbert," she said, in a voice so low, that it reached none but him, and she raised her imploring eyes to his face.

Once more he controlled, with a violent effort, the emotion that was beating so fearfully in his heart. He took her hand in both of his, and, as his lips murmured a blessing, he smiled—and it was the memory of that calm, sweet, angel smile, that went with her, a blessing upon her way.

A

COUNTRY NEIGHBOURHOOD.

Time. I that please some, try all.

Chorus.—Winter's Tale.

A

COUNTRY NEIGHBOURHOOD.

PART THE FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

They grew in beauty side by side.

MRS. HEMANS.

“ How do you do, Mrs. Villars ?” said Mrs. Melville, rising, to receive a morning visitor ; “ this is really kind. I did not know that you were come back from Brighton.”

“ We only came back last night, but I came to see how you all were.”

“ Thank you, all quite well. This is really kind. And how did you get on at Brighton ?” Mrs. Melville hurriedly ran through a list of questions, as, who was there, whether it was empty or full, if the sun had been hot, and

whether or not she and Evelyn and Mr. Villars had bathed, or taken warm-baths, to all of which satisfactory answers were given.

“ And where is Evelyn? why have you not brought her? Clarice is breaking her heart to see her again.”

“ I was not able to let you see Evelyn this morning,” replied Mrs. Villars, hesitatingly; “ but I assure you she is no less anxious to see Clarice again.”

“ Ah, yes, I dare say; they are very fond of each other, but Clarice is sadly impatient—she is so very tender-hearted.”

“ So is Evelyn, so very tender-hearted—it quite makes me anxious sometimes, so unusual in a child of her age. I assure you, she cries so dreadfully if the least thing affects her—parting from Clarice, or from her father, or if she sees a very poor person, that it is quite painful to see—so very tender-hearted.”

“ That is just like Clarice—she cries—that is to say—” for Mrs. Melville’s conscience smote her that she was what schoolboys call

bounding, as Clarice rarely, very rarely cried — “ if she does not, it is because, poor little thing, she knows it is so very painful to me to see, that she conquers herself, but the tears stand in her pretty eyes like dewdrops. There she goes,” as a childish voice was heard outside the door. “ Clarice, come in, and speak to Mrs. Villars.”

A little girl of six or seven years old came into the room. She was very fair and very beautiful, and she went up to Mrs. Villars with a quietness and self-possession unusual in so young a child. Mrs. Villars looked at her with a criticizing air, then kissed her. The little girl looked up in her face. “ Is Evelyn ill? Why is she not here?”

“ She is quite well, thank you,” said Mrs. Villars.

“ Will she not come soon?” she asked, anxiously.

“ Yes; I hope you will soon see her.”

“ That will do, Clarice,” said Mrs. Melville; “ don’t keep Annette waiting. You had better go out while the sun shines.”

“How well Clarice looks!” said Mrs. Villars, as the door closed; and there was some vexation in her manner.

“Yes, indeed she does, I never saw her looking better. We have a young man, an artist, staying with us at present, and he is very much struck with her. He says she reminds him of an angel, or, at least, what we fancy angels to be, and he has made several very pretty sketches of her. He says her little face will appear in many of his future pictures. You must let him make a drawing of Evelyn.”

“No, thank you,” said Mrs. Villars, quickly.

“Oh! you must, indeed; we were describing her to him yesterday, and his remark was, ‘She must be like a little Hebe.’ Pray, let me send him to call at Wilmington.”

“You are very kind,” said Mrs. Villars, with much embarrassment, “but Evelyn is too young at present.”

“Oh! she is as old, and older than Clarice —you must patronize our young friend; I assure you, he quite counts upon it.”

Mrs. Villars was spared the trouble of another refusal by the door bursting open, and the entrance of two children. A dark, bright little girl, with deep blue eyes and cheeks like a peony, flew up to her mother.

“ I couldn’t help it, mamma ; could I, Clarice ? I’m very sorry. I was only just peeping out to see if you were soon coming, and Clarice saw me ; but I didn’t know she was there. I’m very sorry, mamma.”

“ Well, never mind, Evelyn,” said her mother, impatiently ; “ just speak to Mrs. Melville, and run away with Clarice.”

Mrs. Melville fixed her maternal eyes on the little girl, and the cause of Mrs. Villars’s strange conduct was soon apparent. Evelyn had lost her teeth, and, as she had a merry, smiling, and not perhaps classically formed mouth, the loss was but too striking.

“ You see,” said Mrs. Villars, in a tone of great vexation, as the door closed again, “ she is not fit to be seen at present : she lost her teeth at Brighton.”

“ So I perceive,” said Mrs. Melville ; “ it

is a very anxious time, it is such a chance how the second teeth come."

" You appear to forget that Clarice must also lose her teeth."

" Oh, no; but I have no fears for Clarice, *her* mouth is so beautifully formed. I took her to see Cartwright, last year, in London, and he said he never remembered having examined so perfect a mouth."

" That is just what Walker at Brighton said of Evelyn. I assure you, I am not the least uneasy."

" Oh, no, I dare say there is no reason, only Evelyn shows her teeth a good deal, which makes it important, but I have no doubt the new ones will be quite straight."

Mrs. Villars could not quite recover her equanimity, and soon rose to go.

" Must you go?" said Mrs. Melville; " this is but a shabby visit, but I hope we shall soon meet again. Clarice will break her heart if she does not see more of Evelyn, she is so affectionate, poor little thing." As she spoke, Mrs. Melville threw open the drawing-room

window. “Annette, send the young ladies home directly. Mrs. Villars cannot stay.”

As Evelyn came in, she again rushed up to her mother. “I’m sure, I’m very sorry, mamma, but Clarice says she does not care about my teeth, a bit—and do you know, she says she is sure she shall soon lose hers, for one is quite, quite loose.”

“My dear Clarice,” said Mrs. Melville, anxiously, “come here: you never mentioned this.”

The statement of the little girl proved on inspection to be correct: one of her front teeth was very loose. This restored Mrs. Villars to good humour. She was most cordial in her farewell, most pressing in her entreaties to Mrs. Melville, to pay her an early visit at Wilmington. “Evelyn will have no peace till she sees Clarice again,” was her concluding remark, as she paused with her hand upon the door; “she is so affectionate, poor little thing—it is quite remarkable in so young a child.”

The above conversation is but a specimen:

one among the many which took place during the childhood of Clarice Melville and Evelyn Villars. Born within a few miles, and within a few weeks of each other, only children, and exceedingly lovely, their rivalry began before they were many months old, and was steadily carried on during thirteen years.

Mrs. Villars and Mrs. Melville were fond mothers, there is no doubt; but there is also no doubt that the affection of each was increased tenfold by the circumstances in which they were placed — the desire of each parent that her own child should outshine the other, so riveting their attention upon one object, that their minds were incapable of admitting any other. Their rivalship continually brought them to the brink of a separation, and total breach of friendship, for Mrs. Villars was hot-tempered, and, as Mrs. Melville had early taken the line of superiority in Clarice's very perfect style of beauty, the former lady was in a continual state of excitement and ruffled feeling, and words were occasionally exchanged which it was hard to forget; but on

the brink they stopped ; the very quarrels had become necessary to their daily life ; and so, in friendship and enmity, in calm and storm, they struggled on for upwards of thirteen years.

Meanwhile, the little girls grew up, side by side, in unconscious beauty ; the contention of their parents never extended itself to them. Different, strangely different in character, they were only alike in this, that no thought of selfishness or vanity ever tainted their minds ; and, while the rivalry of their mothers brought them continually together, the only effect upon the children was, to form a bond of union and affection as strong as the love of sisters.

CHAPTER II.

She was a phantom of delight,
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely apparition sent
To be a moment's ornament.
Her eyes, as stars of twilight fair ;
Like twilights, too, her dusky hair.
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time's earliest, brightest dawn.
A dancing shape—an image gay—
To haunt, to startle, to waylay.

WORDSWORTH.

At the end of thirteen years, two events interrupted the friendship and the rivalship between the families. Mrs. Villars died, and embarrassment in his affairs compelled Mr. Melville to sell his small estate in Hampshire, and to retire for some years to the Continent. The separation of the two families was soon followed by a total cessation of intercourse. Evelyn and Clarice attempted for a time to

keep up a correspondence, but Mr. Melville's movements were so uncertain, the loss of letters so frequent, and, if received, the delay in answering them so great, that it tried the patience of the young girls too severely ; and though each remembered the other with great affection, three years had elapsed at the time that the story recommences, without any communication whatever between them.

Evelyn Villars, a beautiful girl of nearly eighteen, sat at breakfast early one morning, with her father, and a person who had been her governess, and who remained as her companion, now that the years of regular education were passed.

Mr. Villars hurried through breakfast : he was a country gentleman, a magistrate, and a farmer—usually in a hurry, and fond of being so.

“ Here, Evelyn,” he said, as he hastily got up, “ I really have not time, this morning, to answer any letters ; put these away for me, and this I must get you to answer yourself—

it is from Harcourt—you will see what he says; I shall be very glad to see him and Henry too, who is with him.”

“ Oh! yes, papa, I shall be very glad to write that; we have not seen Mr. Harcourt for two months; and Henry—why it must be nearly two years—how glad I am that he is come back! When did he come?”

“ I don’t know; I had hardly time to read the letter; you must look at it and answer all the questions. And stay, Evelyn; as they are coming, I think we may just as well have a few people. I have not given a dinner for a long time, I have been so busy, but this will be a good opportunity; I dare say, I shall see some people to-day, who will do for dinner; but you must write for me to Miss Law, to ask her if she and Bob will come and spend a few days with us; ask them for Friday next; I want Bob to look at my farm.”

Evelyn made no answer, but by a shudder and a wry face.

“ Nonsense, Evelyn. I wonder, Miss Drake, that you allow Evelyn to make faces at her

fellow-creatures. Just write these letters, my dear, before post-time; and mind that you write civilly to Miss Law."

" Oh, yes, papa! of course, I will; it is only that if there is one thing in the world that makes me shudder all over, it is Miss Law; and I know that you feel the same, papa, if you would but say so."

Mr. Villars laughed. " Never mind, Evelyn; we must be civil to our neighbours." And he left the room.

" Now, Miss Drake," said Evelyn, very unceremoniously pulling her governess out of the breakfast-room, " I shall want your assistance; for papa never gave me a letter to write before. I am glad that at last he thinks I am fit for something; just sit down there, and think a little about grammar, while I get myself ready."

Seizing a large ball of worsted, she proceeded to get herself ready, by throwing it several times across the room, and rushing from one end to the other to catch it; at last, she came breathless and sate down. " Oh,

Miss Drake! I do feel so very happy this morning!"

"Don't you generally feel happy, my dear?" inquired her grave, matter-of-fact governess.

"Oh, yes, always! but still I think I feel particularly happy to-day; I feel in such good spirits, that I should like to leap over the chairs, and behave quite like a child. Ah! I see what you are thinking!—you mean that I behave like a child always; but, now, Miss Drake, you would not like me to be as grave and steady as you are always—would you? I dare say you made a noise sometimes when you were young."

"Perhaps I did, my dear—I don't remember."

"And yet, do you know, I don't think you did. I think you must have been a *very* good child. Were you ever naughty, do you think? I should like to have seen you!"

"My dear Evelyn, I think you are talking a great deal of nonsense. You had much better write your letters."

"So I will; but it was the letters that made

me talk, because I was going to tell you why I feel so very happy this morning. You see, Miss Drake, I think that sometimes Wilmington is a little dull. I think I rather like society—just a little—for a change. I like to see this long room with more people in it than papa, and you, and me; and sometimes I do wish to put some of my pretty gowns on. You like society, too, don't you, Miss Drake?"

"Yes, my dear, I like everything."

"So you do; that is just what I have often wondered at; and do you know that I don't quite like it—I like people to have their likes and dislikes.....however, I suppose I must not talk any more. I will begin with Mr. Harcourt. I must just read his letters over. Now, don't look at me while I am writing, please."

There was a silence.

"Now, Miss Drake, how do you think this does? I will read it to you: 'My dear Mr. Harcourt'....."

"You should not say '*my* dear,' my dear

Evelyn. Young ladies do not say ‘my’ to gentlemen—it is not proper.”

Evelyn put up her eyes. “Oh, dear—oh, dear! how tiresome it is about propriety! I never shall understand it. How did you learn all about it, Miss Drake? Now, it will give me the trouble of writing this all over again, and make me waste this nice bit of paper!”

“Oh, no, my dear! don’t waste the paper!”—Miss Drake was a strict economist—“I only tell you as a rule, and beg you to remember for the future. As Mr. Harcourt is not a very young gentleman, perhaps it may not matter with him.”

“No, I dare say he will never think at all about it; I am sure I should not. Now, listen, Miss Drake:—

“‘My dear Mr. Harcourt,—

“‘Papa was obliged to go out this morning, and so he desired me to write and say that he should be very glad to see you. But, as I write, I will write for myself, and tell you that I thought you had forgotten us, and that I cannot say how happy I am to

think of seeing you again, and Juliet, too ; and I hope you will stay a long time. I want your advice about a great many things.

“ ‘ I am your very affectionate,
“ ‘ EVELYN VILLARS.’ ”

With the vision of the wasted paper before her, Miss Drake was guarded in her expressions of disapprobation.

“ The letter is pretty well, my dear. As I said before, Mr. Harcourt knows you so well, that, I dare say, he will excuse.....but it is not the proper way to write to gentlemen. You must not call propriety tiresome, my dear Evelyn. No young lady is well thought of who does not guide her conduct by the rules of propriety and discretion. It is not the first time that I have had to remind you of it.”

“ Oh, no, Miss Drake ! it seems to me that it is always coming in the way. But, you think, that, for this once, it will not signify. Mr. Harcourt is not like anybody else, you know. I should be very careful myself, if it were a stranger.”

“ But, my dear, you have forgotten about Mr. Egerton.”

“ Oh, dear, so I did ! But it will do in a postscript. I always see a postscript in your letters, and I think that it looks rather nice. But it was very odd that I should have forgotten about Henry ; it was all that propriety that put it out of my head ; because I like him better than almost anybody—he is so very funny ; and I am so glad to think of seeing him again. You don’t like him, I think, Miss Drake ?”

“ Oh, yes, my dear ! I like everybody ; but I think Mr. Egerton used to be rather selfish and thoughtless. I dare say he knows better now. But you are losing this whole morning. Write your note to Miss Law, my dear Evelyn, and let us get to our reading.”

Spoiled in her childhood by her mother—in her youth by her father—rather controlling than being controlled by Miss Drake—Evelyn Villars, at eighteen, was still a child in everything but the name—with the faults alike and the virtues of the earliest years. Pure, true,

transparent as the day, sweet-tempered and unselfish, she was also thoughtless, self-willed, volatile, and petulant. Yet, taken all in all, with the charm of her character, of her beauty, and of her frank, engaging manners, she was one of those bright beings, on whose fate in life it is impossible not to ponder with melancholy interest; one of those whom we involuntarily address in the touching words of Moore—

“ Whene'er I see those smiling eyes,
 All filled with hope, and joy, and light,
As if no cloud could ever rise
 To dim a Heaven so purely bright,
I sigh to think how soon that brow
 In grief must lose its every ray,
And that young heart, so joyous now,
 Almost forget it once was gay.”

CHAPTER III.

I saw her upon nearer view,

A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food.

WORDSWORTH.

A loud yawn from Evelyn Villars, as she threw herself in a chair in the passage leading to her bed-room, was the conclusion of the Friday evening's entertainment.

“ After all, Miss Drake, I don't think I do like society. People don't seem to suit, and it's all very tiresome. I did not like this evening half so much as I expected.”

“ That is often the way, my dear; when we look forward to a thing too much, we are most likely to be disappointed.”

“ I do think you have collected a great number of the most disagreeable ideas,” said

Evelyn, rather pettishly ; “ it was not because I expected to like the evening that it was tiresome, but people made themselves tiresome. That Miss Law ! it is quite impossible to enjoy anything when she is in the room.”

“ I don’t see how she can have spoiled your enjoyment, my dear Evelyn ; for I don’t think you spoke to her once during the whole evening.”

Evelyn slightly blushed. “ I hope you did not mind talking to her, Miss Drake ; I really could not help it.”

“ Oh, no, my dear ! I like Miss Law very well ; but I hoped you had enjoyed yourself, for you seemed very merry with Mr. Egerton.”

“ Yes, I should have enjoyed myself very much, if it had not been for Mr. Harcourt ; but I don’t like Mr. Harcourt to find fault with me. He came up and said, ‘ I’m sorry to see that you think more of yourself than of your guests :’ and I *could not* help talking to Henry, could I ? ”

“ I don’t know, indeed, my dear.”

“ I begged him then, and I begged him

before, to go away ; I said either he or I must go and talk to Miss Law, but he said I should not stir, and that he did not come from London to talk to a nasty old maid. So could I help it?"

" I am afraid Mr. Egerton is still selfish, my dear Evelyn."

" Oh, no, not selfish ! and, as to talking, Miss Drake, I was very near asking Mr. Harcourt why he did not talk himself to Miss Law, instead of sitting quite silent, as he did ; only I don't like to be impertinent to him."

" Mr. Harcourt is very uneasy about Miss Juliet. I think that made him more silent than usual. She has got one of her bad headaches, and they always seem to frighten him."

" Oh, poor little Juliet !" said Evelyn ; " I thought she was only tired. Why didn't Mr. Harcourt tell me ? I should have liked to go and see her. I wonder if she wants anything ; I must just run and see !" and she was off in an instant. Miss Drake remonstrated, and followed her.

As Evelyn softly opened the door of Juliet

Harcourt's room, she saw Mr. Harcourt sitting by his little girl's bed. He got up, and smiled as she entered.

"Poor Juliet! I did not know you had got a headache," said Evelyn, kindly; "I am so sorry. I hope you are better now."

"Much better, thank you," said the little girl. "I shall soon be quite well; I wish papa would go to bed."

"Oh, Mr. Harcourt!" cried Evelyn, "do go to bed, and let me sit by Juliet. I'm sure I should not be sleepy."

Mr. Harcourt smiled affectionately at her. "Which do you think would be the most likely to be sleepy, Evelyn—you, who always go to bed at eleven, or I, who am always up at one, and later still? Many thanks, though, from me and from Juliet too, for your kind offer."

"It is twelve o'clock now, my dear Evelyn," said Miss Drake, looking at her watch and fidgeting; "you had better go to bed, and Miss Juliet will be better, too, if she is quiet." With some difficulty, she drew her pupil away.

“Papa,” said Juliet, as the door closed, “do you think Evelyn thoughtless or selfish?”

“Why, my dear child, do you ask?” said her father, with some surprise.

“Because, papa, sometimes I see you look so gravely at her when she speaks; and just now, when she said she would sit by me, you looked quite different, as if you were pleased with her.”

“If I do sometimes think her thoughtless, Juliet, I excuse it. She is so bright and so happy now, I can hardly wish to see her other than she is; but Time will teach her to think more, both for herself and for others;” and Mr. Harcourt involuntarily sighed.

The little girl raised her dark eyes to his face. “Do you love Evelyn, papa?”

The father was silent for a moment at his young daughter’s question; then he answered her. “Yes, Juliet. I watched her when she was a very young and very lovely child, and I wondered what she would be as a woman; and now I watch her with even more interest, and wonder what her future life will be. She

is almost as another daughter to me," and he bent, and kissed his child's forehead ; " but, my dear Juliet, we ought to be sleeping, not talking, at this time of night. Will you not try to sleep ?"

Juliet obediently closed her eyes, and Mr. Harcourt sate by her side in silence.

Evelyn woke the next morning with the oppression of Miss Law still on her mind. Her conscience smote her for the incivility of the preceding evening, and yet to entertain her the livelong day. " Job never underwent this !" she said to herself. Before she was dressed, she flew to her father's room, to beg him to think of some plan to pass the time away. Mr. Villars laughed and promised. The result of his meditations appeared at breakfast.

" I suppose you have all the beauties of the neighbourhood by heart, Miss Law," said Mr. Villars to that lady, as she sate by his side ; " otherwise, it is such a fine day, that I should propose an expedition."

“Don’t be afraid with her, Mr. Villars,” said Bob Law. “I never can get her to see anything. I had the finest cattle last year that ever were seen, and—would you believe it?—she never once went to look at them!”

“I am afraid I am a sad stay-at-home,” said Miss Law, sweetly. “Home and its occupations are so delightful; but I should enjoy an expedition, of all things, to-day. We have not often the inducement of such agreeable society.”

“Well, then, an expedition is a settled thing. What are our chief beauties, Bob? I am always so busy, that I know little more of my own county than I do of Otaheite.”

“Duty before pleasure with you.....” began Miss Law, but Bob interrupted her—

“Why, there’s the manufactory at Belford, well worth seeing; or the rope-works at Dawtrey; or, what do you say to Veck Farm? they say old Dixon has some of the most splendid cattle, and it’s a pretty spot, too.”

Mr. Villars laughed.

“How you talk, Bob!” said Miss Law; “who

ever heard of ladies going to see ropes and cattle?"

"If you have nothing better to propose," said Mr. Villars, "I was thinking of Redlynch. I have not been there for many years, but I remember thinking it very pretty, when I saw it. It is only ten miles off, and I hear it is now to be sold."

"It's the very thing!" cried Bob Law; "I have been wishing to get there this week past, but my horses are dead lame. Yes, it's up for sale. Mr. Grant died very much in debt; all the country have been to see it. They say he left some fine stock too, which is to be sold. There's a ram, they say...."

"Hush! Bob; you forget that there are ladies present. This will be charming," continued Miss Law, turning to Mr. Villars; "just the kind of party I like—no *gêne*, no form; and I suppose a cold luncheon, pastoral-like, under the trees."

Henry Egerton had listened in silence and apparent indifference to the plans for the day, up to this point, but here he gave a look of

inexpressible disgust at Evelyn. She hastily interfered.

“ I think, Miss Law, that will hardly be necessary ; if we have luncheon an hour earlier here, it will save all the trouble of taking it with us.”

“ Oh ! but Miss Villars,” said Bob, “ you spoil the whole party. ‘ What is a party without cold chicken ?’ as my father used to say. Do you remember a day last spring, Lavinia, when we went to Summerhill, and we had chickens and pies, and ham and sherry, and champagne even, and a very pleasant day it was ? that was the day that Captain Miller proposed to Miss Wells, and what fun we had, quizzing them, and all that sort of thing !”

“ Oh ! yes, I remember ; and how delicious our luncheon was, under the trees. It reminds one of the olden time, Mr. Villars, when all was calmness and innocence. No pomp, no retinue. I am sure you agree with me.”

“ As to the luncheon, to-day,” said Mr. Villars, smiling, “ certainly, if you wish it.” Miss Law bowed gracefully to the compliment.

“Otherwise, if I did not know that ladies’ appetites were both incomprehensible and insatiable, I should have said, with Evelyn, that it was scarcely necessary.”

“Oh, Mr. Villars, for shame!—how can you be so severe? Gentlemen make ladies provide, and then avail themselves of what they call ladies’ weaknesses, as we shall see to-day;” and she smiled archly.

Mr. Villars rose hastily from breakfast, to avoid the confession of his not having the smallest intention of joining the party.

As they all were leaving the breakfast-room, Henry Egerton drew Evelyn aside.

“I tell you what, Evelyn: hang me if I am caught at Wilmington again! You know how I hate these friends of yours, at the best of times; and now, if I am to see you all gnawing chicken-bones, my nerves can’t stand it.”

“I’m sure, Henry, I am quite as sorry to have them here as you can be; but I will prevent the luncheon, if possible, and they go home to-morrow, after church—I have ascertained that. Now don’t be cross just for this

one day. See, it rains," she said, running to the window. " I know Miss Law don't like to wet her feet, so we shall escape the luncheon—now, do come and help me to talk to her, for a little while—there's a kind Henry."

" How I hate women!" said Henry, as he followed his cousin into the drawing-room.

CHAPTER IV.

. . . . Those loving, lustrous eyes—
The sun of another world doth in their brightness rise.

After an hour's duty in the drawing-room, Evelyn took her work, and went up to sit with little Juliet Harcourt, who was still confined to her room.

The little girl was lying on the sofa, and deeply engaged in drawing, for which she had a peculiar and natural talent. There was something about her which was painful to see. She was beautiful; but it was a saddening beauty. The transparent fairness of her complexion, through which every vein was discernible, the brightness of her dark Italian eyes, and the flush that went and came upon her cheek, all spoke too plainly of “the doom Heaven gives its favourites—early death.”

The expression, too, of her face, was painful ; there was in it an almost unnatural calmness and thoughtfulness : and though the eyes of her father, and those who were accustomed to see her, beheld her without any fearful degree of interest, to a stranger, she always appeared as one passing from this world—almost as one already belonging to another.

She looked up from her drawing, as Evelyn entered. “ Oh ! thank you, Evelyn, for coming, when you are so busy. I did not the least think you could have come this morning.”

“ Oh, yes, Juliet ; I always come, if I can, for you know I like sitting with you, better than anything in the world—except,” she added, after a pause, for she was truth itself, “ when you are in great pain. And then, if I can do no good, I don’t like to see it—for I don’t like pain and suffering of any kind. But let me look at your drawing. Oh ! how very pretty !”

It was a kneeling figure of a nun ; and, though there were some youthful faults in the execution, the conception of the attitude and

the expression of the face would have done credit to a more experienced artist.

“ But why,” continued Evelyn, “ do you always draw such very grave things, Juliet? I can’t think why you do.”

“ I suppose, because I am grave myself,” said the little girl; “ and merry things never come into my head. I can’t fancy them—but, if you would think of a subject for me, that you would like better, I should like very much to try if I could do it.”

“ Let me see,” said Evelyn, pondering—“ I think, I should like a girl, very much in love—I like that sort of thing very much—could you do it, do you think?”

Little Juliet laughed. “ I will try, Evelyn; but I’m sure I don’t know how she ought to look. You must describe her to me. Is she to be happy, or unhappy?”

“ Oh! happy, for me,” said Evelyn, shaking back the curls from her own radiant face. “ I don’t like unhappiness, I like everything to be as bright as the sun. She must be happy, certainly—I will try and describe what I think.

I think she should be leaning, with her arms upon the table, and her eyes looking down, as if she was thinking, but still not grave; just smiling a little—only a little, however, because I don't think love is ever merry, is it? And I think this will make a very pretty picture—will you try it?"

Juliet took up some drawing-paper, and Evelyn sate down to her work-frame, and for some time both were silent. Suddenly Evelyn stopped, and looked up. "Do you know, Juliet, I should like very much to be in love; at least, what I mean is, that I should like very, very much that somebody should *really* love me."

"Does not your papa love you?" asked Juliet, raising her dark eyes inquiringly.

"Oh! yes...." said Evelyn, gravely. "I suppose so; but....."

"Perhaps, your papa does not love you enough," said Juliet, "not like mine—for I can't fancy wishing for anything else; but I dare say very few people have a father like mine."

“ To tell you the truth, Juliet, I think very few have. I was thinking, last night, how much I should like Mr. Harcourt to watch me, if I was ill—I mean, if he was my father,” she added, with the most perfect gravity, as Juliet looked at her, with a kind of smile. “ *My* papa never thinks of such a thing : however ill I may be, he just tells Miss Drake to take care that I get well directly, and then he goes out, just as usual.”

“ But, then, you never are *very* ill, are you, Evelyn ?”

“ No, perhaps, not *very* ill, but not at all comfortable, sometimes. What I should like would be, somebody to think of me all day long, and take care of me, and even teach me ; I should rather like that, Juliet, if it was a nice person, and all to myself. But there, now, I have put a black stitch in my little boy’s cheek. How tiresome it is !”

In occasional conversation, and occasional silence, an hour passed happily away ; for there was but little difference in the intellect of the happy, thoughtless girl of eighteen, and

the grave, intelligent, suffering child of ten. They were interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Harcourt; he smiled affectionately at Evelyn, to thank her for her visit to his little daughter, and then drew a chair to Juliet's side.

Mr. Harcourt was about six and thirty, and had been for seven years a widower. He had married early, and married unhappily. Though a young man of good sense, good feeling, and good principle, none of these good qualities had prevented his being led away, by a foolish passing fancy. Blinded by the beauty of a young Italian girl, whom he met with accidentally in his travels, he married her after an acquaintance of three weeks, and he repented of it for life.

Mrs. Harcourt was beautiful, and not without that quickness of imagination which is common to her countrywomen; but she was vain, frivolous, and selfish; ignorant, jealous, restless, and excitable; and the four years of Mr. Harcourt's married life were years of endurance, of utter misery. He behaved well; though all feeling of love for his wife died

away in the course of a very few weeks, pity and duty remained ; and rarely, very rarely, was he betrayed into a want of that respect, and consideration and forbearance, which, he told himself, was her due. He had taken upon himself, rashly and blindly, the care of this wayward being, and he tried to the uttermost to fulfil the duties that devolved upon him.

At the end of four years, worn out with the excitement of her self-inflicted torments, Mrs. Harcourt died of a rapid decline—and, in her last days, something of love arose in her husband's mind — though it was less the love of a husband than the love of a father for a weak and foolish child. He watched her with the tenderest care, night and day ; and, in after years, he could look back upon the first and last week of his married life with regret.

The impression of that life, however, never faded from Mr. Harcourt's mind ; it left him grave, thoughtful, sad,—the fire of youth quenched, the hopes of life blighted.

“ Why, Juliet, what have we here ?” said

Mr. Harcourt, examining his daughter's drawing. "Is this meant for Evelyn?"

Evelyn jumped up, and looked over his shoulder. "Oh, how very pretty! Mr. Harcourt, do you really mean that that is like me?"

"A little like you," said Juliet, "only not pretty enough; is it, papa?"

Mr. Harcourt smiled. "A little too grave and sentimental for Evelyn, I think."

"Yes, papa; because I did not quite mean it for Evelyn; but she asked me to draw something of this sort, and I could not help looking at her face."

"And what is this young lady supposed to be doing?"

"She is in love," said Juliet, seriously.

"This was your thought, Evelyn," said Mr. Harcourt, looking at her, with a smile and a shake of his head.

"Juliet always draws such very serious things," replied Evelyn, "that I wanted her to try something more worldly; I mean, just for a change, something like what people feel."

"And is this the way in which you mean

to sit when you are in love?" said Mr. Harcourt, affectedly imitating the attitude of the drawing.

"I see you are laughing at me, Mr. Harcourt; but I think the picture a very pretty picture, much prettier than the nun, though that is pretty, too, and I don't see what there is to laugh at."

"Pray forgive me, Evelyn; I am only wondering if love will ever change you into a sentimental young lady like this."

"I should think being in love would be very likely to make a person more grave," said Evelyn.

"Why do you think so—will you tell me?" and Mr. Harcourt looked with much interest in her face.

"Because, if I speak for myself, at least, I should like to marry somebody much better and much cleverer than myself; somebody to look up to; and then, though I think I should be very happy, I can fancy that it would make me more grave, because I should be so very anxious to please him."

Mr. Harcourt made no answer, but continued to examine his daughter's drawing.

"Now I have finished my little boy's face," said Evelyn, jumping up from her frame. "I made a resolution that I would finish it this morning, and a very pretty little boy it is. Good bye, Juliet! I am afraid I must go now to this weary, weary party. I hope you will not be very lonely all day." She stooped and kissed the little girl, gaily wished Mr. Harcourt good bye, and bounded away, with the light, joyous step that betokens unclouded happiness.

CHAPTER V.

A quaint and antique mansion, ivy-crowned,
Trim terraces, and verdant lawns around,
And perfumed flowers, and the woodbirds' sound.

There was a damp upon the spirits of almost all the party as they drove to Redlynch. Bob Law, whose good humour was imperturbable, and power of conversation unlimited, had been banished by Henry Egerton to the barouche-box, the latter having unceremoniously told him that his legs were too long for an inside place. Henry had determined to sit by Evelyn ; but when he found himself in his chosen seat, the faces of Miss Drake and Miss Law, who were opposite to him, had so serious an effect upon his temper, that even Evelyn was affected by his ill-humour, and wished sincerely for an exchange between him and Bob Law. Miss

Law was cross, because the party was so poorly provided with gentlemen ; “ in fact, it was nonsense to call it a party at all,” as she remarked to Miss Drake, “ and she had been very much misled by the morning’s conversation.” Even Miss Drake, though her calmness could not be ruffled, was, in some degree, put out by Henry’s incivility.

In consequence, the drive was far from being a pleasant one. During the latter part of the way, the whole conversation consisted in the remarks made by Bob Law on the cattle and the crops, with occasional civil answers from Miss Drake or Evelyn. The whole party, therefore, gladly acquiesced in his proposal to get out and walk through the Park, as soon as they passed the gates of Redlynch.

“ Now, Henry, pray don’t be so cross,” said poor Evelyn, as she walked a few steps before the others ; “ it does make it so very tiresome.”

“ I am better now, thank you, Evelyn,” he answered, calmly ; “ it was those two faces opposite to me which quite upset my nerves.

I will even talk to Miss Law, if you wish it, now that I can do it sideways, if you will promise to take a walk with me afterwards."

"Oh, yes, certainly! Let us walk all together to the house, and there some horrible gardener, or somebody, will come to show the place, which is a thing I hate; and we can leave him to Miss Law, and take a walk ourselves."

Henry walked back, and placed himself by Miss Law. "What a beautiful day; is it not?" he said, in a tone of excessive civility.

But Miss Law's temper had been too much soured to be taken in. "I think we discussed the weather amply in the carriage, Mr. Eger-ton."

"So we did. I had forgotten that. What a very pretty park this is!"

"Very."

"I should think it is just the place in which a lady would like to settle."

"What do you mean by settle?" asked Miss Law, in a very wrathful tone.

"He means marry," said Evelyn, turning her imploring eyes on Henry, for her sweet

temper was severely tried by the continual bickering and irritation which had been going on ever since they left Wilmington. "You must not be angry, Miss Law, with anything that Henry says, for he always will talk in this sort of way."

"Here," she cried, running forwards a moment afterwards, and gathering some large daisies, "do let us try *il m'aime* upon these, and see which of us is liked the best!" As she smilingly gave one to each, the brightness and sweetness of her face, in some degree, thawed the ill-temper of both her companions.

Nothing could be more fortunate, as it happened, than Evelyn's proposal; for, in the first place, she had to teach the words to Bob Law, and this occupied some time, while his extraordinary attempts at pronunciation afforded much amusement; and, secondly, Miss Law stood alone in the possession of *passionnement*, Evelyn and Henry being doomed to *un peu* and *point du tout*. As Miss Law triumphantly proclaimed that she was loved *passionnement*, the last cloud cleared from her brow,

and they proceeded in great harmony to the house.

The park of Redlynch was not large, but it was very pretty. The ground was uneven, and it had been planted in a manner which showed off the ground to the best advantage. On one side of the park, a rapid stream ran beneath a wooded bank, and this was visible from the house through occasional vistas made by the clumps of fine spreading trees. Bob Law, who was quite at home, led his little party, through a winding path, to the front of the house, from which two terrace gardens sloped down to the park, and were connected with it by a flight of stone steps. It was an old-fashioned-looking place. The house was of brick, but old brick ; and brick is one of the things which owes a debt of gratitude to time. It was of irregular architecture, but the windows were of the Elizabethan style ; here and there the walls were covered with ivy. No one would have said “what a pretty house ;” but it had a picturesque appearance, which was almost more than beauty. The

two stiff terraces sloped from the south front, and were at this time bright with autumnal flowers.

Henry Egerton and Evelyn were in real admiration of the place, and were warm in their expressions of praise, as they went up one of the flights of steps into the second garden. When they reached the top, their attention was attracted by a gentleman, who sate on a rough garden seat, with his back towards them, and who appeared to be making a sketch of the house. He just glanced round on hearing their voices, then went on with his occupation. Bob Law had lingered a little behind ; as he joined them, his eye also fell on the stranger.

“ Hullo ! why that is—oh, no, it isn’t !—yet it must be—he’s as like as two plums..... yes, it is—it’s Colonel Maxwell ;” and, going towards the stranger, he laid his hand heavily on his shoulder. “ Hullo, Colonel Maxwell ! how, in the name of wonder, come you here ?”

The person thus addressed looked up, smiled, and nodded, then proceeded with his drawing.

“ I’m sure I’m uncommonly glad to see you ; but you are the very last person I should have expected to meet here. What can bring you into these parts ?”

“ Business,” was the laconic reply.

“ Well, I’m sure I’m uncommonly glad to see you here. But where do you come from ?”

“ I left London a few days ago.”

“ Indeed ! is there any news stirring ?”

“ Much as usual, I believe, at this time of year ; funds low, Queen travelling, nobody marrying, and everybody poor.” And again he put a few touches to his drawing.

Bob Law laughed convulsively. “ So you are making a sketch of this house—it’s very good ; but I beg your pardon, my dear fellow, that part is a vision of your own. You must be dreaming !”

“ Not dreaming, only planning. This is how I mean it to be.”

“ Mean it to be ! My dear fellow, you are not going to buy Redlynch !”

“ Not exactly, seeing it already belongs to me.”

“ Belongs to you !” with a voice that had reached a shriek. “ How, in the name of wonder, has all this happened ?”

“ Is it so very wonderful ?” said Colonel Maxwell, smiling, though he had rather intended to astonish his acquaintance. “ I bought it a week ago ; I took possession of it the day before yesterday.”

“ What, stock and all ?”

“ Stock and all.”

Evelyn looked at Henry with dismay, as she listened to this short conversation. The impertinence of their present behaviour troubled her extremely. After a moment’s thought, to Henry’s astonishment, with a grace and self-possession which was sometimes wanting in her joyous manners, she approached the place where Colonel Maxwell was sitting.

“ I feel we should make some apology for being here,” she said ; “ but I hope you believe that we did not know—that we had not heard—that Redlynch was already sold.”

As the tones of her sweet clear voice fell on his ear, Colonel Maxwell looked up—as

his eyes met the bright animated face that was bent towards him, he rose hastily, and took off his hat.

“ I am sure you are very welcome,” he replied ; “ if it could be an intrusion, the fault is my own. Pray, do not let what I have said interfere with your intentions this afternoon.” And, again taking off his hat, he gathered together his drawing materials, and walked towards the house.

“ Don’t you think we had better go, Henry ? ” said Evelyn, rejoining him.

“ No ; I think it would be uncivil, now—we can leave the garden—remember your promise : let us take a walk.”

Evelyn gladly consented, and they walked away, leaving Miss Law in perfect happiness at the prospect opening before her : a stranger, a neighbour, as she believed an unmarried one, and one who, from her brother’s acquaintance, seemed especially marked out as her own.

“ That was prettily done, Evelyn,” said Henry Egerton. “ This is the first time that

I ever saw you act like a woman — that is, a sensible woman. I congratulate you.”

“ I know, Henry—I never can do anything of the sort, but necessity is the mother of invention,” she added, laughing. “ I saw the words bursting from the lips of both Miss Drake and Miss Law, and I could not bear that. Don’t you know, sometimes,” she continued, after a pause, “ that one takes a fancy to a person without any reason, and that one wishes to leave a pleasant impression ; now, I took that sort of fancy to Colonel Maxwell, and I should have been very sorry that he should think we were odd, as he would, if poor dear Miss Drake had spoken, or vulgar as he must have thought us, if Miss Law had gone simpering up, with an apology ; so I was obliged to be quick myself.”

“ And you wished him to say, ‘ How very fascinating Miss Villars is ! ’ ”

Evelyn looked up, with a smile. “ I should not be offended if he said it ; but I did not think of it.”

“ Do you know, Evelyn, my belief is, that

you are, or rather will be, for you have not had much opportunity yet, the greatest flirt in Christendom."

"What is a flirt?" she said, innocently.
"I never quite understand; if it is to wish for people to like one, and to think one rather nice, I am afraid I am a flirt."

"Yes, that is the beginning of it."

"And, what is the end?"

"To become the most odious, vain, selfish, heartless being in creation."

"Oh, Henry!" said poor Evelyn, "what have I ever done to make you think so ill of me?"

"Oh! you have not done much yet; but I see it—all women are more or less heartless; and my opinion is, that if you don't take care, you will be a regular woman—that is, a regular flirt."

They had wandered down the stiff but pretty pleasure-ground, and stood at the foot of a wooded bank, through which several paths had been cut. As they paused, uncertain which way to take, the owner of the place himself approached them.

“ I am come to intrude,” he said, with a smile ; “ but, hearing that we were neighbours, Miss Villars, and that you are not very well acquainted with Redlynch, I could not refuse myself the pleasure of showing you some of the beauties that I have already discovered.”

The quiet and respectful tone of his manner made his coming, whatever inclination might have had to do with it, seem like an act of pure courtesy.

Henry looked at his watch ; he wanted to walk with Evelyn, and was angry at the interruption ; but Evelyn replied, with an endeavour to please both parties.

“ I don’t think we have much time to spare, but a little way we should like very much to go.”

“ I should like, then, to show you a view, which I flatter myself I have discovered, from the top of this bank : it is but a little way. I had a path mown this morning ;” and he led the way, along a narrow grass walk. As they went along, he entered at once quietly, but easily, into conversation.

“ Were you ever at Redlynch before, Miss Villars ?”

“ I have not been here since I was ten years old, and I do think it so very pretty.”

“ It took my fancy very much,” said Colonel Maxwell, “ about a month ago, when quite by chance I came down to look at it. There is something so quaint and picturesque about the place. Is your father’s house as pretty, Miss Villars ?”

“ No, I think not. *I* think it very nice and pretty, because I am so used to it ; but I should not think it would take a stranger’s fancy so much.”

“ I think you deprecate Wilmington, Evelyn,” said Henry Egerton, anxious for an opportunity to contradict. “ I call it a very pretty place.”

“ So do I, Henry, I am sure ; but then it looks new, and I like an old-fashioned place best.”

“ It is a matter of taste,” said Colonel Maxwell, “ but I agree with Miss Villars. Here,” he said, as they reached the top of the bank,

“ this is the view that I like so much: Catching that dark hill behind the house gives a kind of wildness to the park; it reminds me of my native land.”

“ Only Scotland,” he added, smiling, in answer to Evelyn’s glance, which was as if she next expected to hear that her new acquaintance was a Hottentot.

“ It is very pretty,” said Evelyn; “ and the river, seen from this place, seems almost as if it ran from the top of the hill.”

“ Exactly. I was poking about the place the first evening I came, and I found this view; and now I come here very often, this is my third visit to-day, and here I plan my changes.”

“ Do you meditate many improvements?” asked Henry.

“ I did not dignify them with the name of improvements—I only called them changes.”

“ But, I suppose you mean them to be improvements.”

“ I suppose, I hope that they will turn out to be improvements; but my object was, as I

said, changes. I have a passion for things of my own creation—I can't let things remain as they are."

" But I suppose you would not change and spoil," said Evelyn, looking up rather wonderingly.

" Not spoil, to my own taste—perhaps, to that of others. I am afraid I had rather my neighbours, if my neighbours are kind enough to visit me, would say, ' How that fellow, Maxwell, has spoiled the place ! ' than ' Ah, there's the dear old place, just the same as it always was ! ' "

Evelyn laughed ; Henry smiled, rather contemptuously.

" It is a weakness, I know," said Colonel Maxwell, " but it is the truth."

During the latter part of the conversation they had been going down the hill, and Colonel Maxwell now led them through another part of the pleasure-grounds, back to the garden. As they joined the rest of the party, Evelyn was laughing merrily with her new acquaintance. Miss Drake approached her ; Colonel Maxwell joined Bob Law.

“ How is this, my dear Evelyn ?—where have you been ?—what am I to say to Mr. Villars about such behaviour ?”

“ Ah ! Miss Drake,” said Henry, “ I must say that you do let Evelyn behave in a very curious way.”

“ I, Mr. Egerton !—and if you take her from me, in this way, how am I to prevent it ? I am quite ashamed, Evelyn, of such improper conduct ; and what am I to say to Mr. Villars, for allowing you to walk about with a strange gentleman in this way ?”

“ What a very strange world this is !” said Evelyn, with an attempt at a sigh ; “ one can never do right, and all because of propriety—but never mind, Miss Drake, I will explain it all to papa,—I could not help it, and I’m sure he won’t think it odd.”

When they joined the others, they found Bob Law descanting at great length on the cattle ; and Miss Law, at every pause in the conversation, touching her brother’s arm, and saying, “ Introduce me, brother.”

When Bob at last attended to his sister’s request, the bow of Colonel Maxwell, in return

for her pretty but common-place speech, of its being their first, but, she trusted, not their last, meeting, had a civility and respect which she rarely met with from young men, and it emboldened her to make another advance towards intimacy, by saying how much pleasure it would give her to see him at Brook Lawn. To this, also, after a moment's pause, and a glance at Evelyn, he bowed a grateful acquiescence; and when Bob suggested an early day, next week even, he agreed to it also, and the following Friday was fixed on for his visit. When this was settled, Miss Drake's remark that it was getting very late was attended to, and Colonel Maxwell accompanied them to the carriage.

When they reached it, Henry Egerton jumped up on the barouche-box, saying he wished to see the view, and Bob Law must manage his legs as he could. It did require a good deal of management to fit them into the carriage; and, while the operation of coiling them up and placing them under the seat was going on, Evelyn leant out of the carriage, and

again, with her more graceful and self-possessed manner, thanked Colonel Maxwell for his kindness. He bowed and smiled, and waved his hand to them as they drove away.

“ Well, Bob,” said Miss Law, before they had got many yards from the house, “ I congratulate you on your friend—very different indeed from the usual style of your acquaintance—I assure you that I consider Colonel Maxwell one of the most agreeable, polite, and gentlemanly persons that I ever met with, and I hope we shall see a great deal of him. You have every reason to be proud of your friend.”

“ As to friend, Lavinia,” said Bob, honestly, “ he is not much of that—I should never have thought of asking him to Brook Lawn, but I am very glad you did it.”

“ Well, let it be acquaintance—that, I believe, with you, Bob, is the more dignified expression; *friends* you keep for grooms and farmers.”

“ Who is Colonel Maxwell?” asked Evelyn, with great interest.

“ Why, I don’t know much about him ; he belongs to a good family in Scotland, and his father is very rich, and I believe he is very rich, too. I met him last year, when I went to Mackenzie’s, to shoot, up in the Highlands, and they made a great deal of him, and Mackenzie said he was the nicest fellow in the world. And I fancy he is a great catch, for Mrs. Mackenzie was very civil, and every night there was a great fuss about Miss Mackenzie singing some favourite song. I’m a stupid fellow, Miss Villars, but I understand a little about ladies’ tricks.”

“ And did he seem to like Miss Mackenzie ? ” inquired Evelyn.

“ No, to tell you the truth, he did not seem to care about any of the ladies ; but he was as wild about shooting then, as he is about Redlynch now, and Mackenzie said he was always wild about something or other, that kind of fellow.”

“ That is just the sort of person I like,” said Evelyn, warmly ; “ I like people who are interested about things, and who get excited.”

“ I dare say you do,” said Bob Law, winking, at which Miss Law drew herself up, but which passed quite unconsciously on Evelyn ; “ but, however, Colonel Maxwell is a very nice fellow ; I sprained my foot when we were out shooting, and he was the only person that turned back with me, wild as he was about shooting at the time. I don’t forget that sort of thing.”

During the drive home, Evelyn several times attempted to draw Henry Egerton into conversation, for she was pained at his ill-humour or displeasure ; but he either did not, or pretended not, to hear her, for his head was resolutely bent towards the horses.

As they drove up to Wilmington, Mr. Villars and Mr. Harcourt appeared upon the steps.

“ Why, Evelyn, how late you are !” said Mr. Villars, as she jumped out ; “ the dressing-bell has rung this half hour. Have you had such a very pleasant day ?”

Evelyn looked at Miss Drake. She reserved her own speech till she had been attacked.

“ I am sure, sir, I am very sorry it should have happened so, but it was not my fault. Miss Villars and Mr. Egerton left our party ; and I am sorry to say that Mr. Egerton allowed Miss Villars to walk about with a strange gentleman, a very agreeable person, as it appears, but of whose principles I know nothing.”

“ I don’t think I could help it, papa,” said Evelyn, in answer to her father’s astonished glance. “ Colonel Maxwell just offered to show us the place, and I thought it would be uncivil to refuse, and I don’t think it was more than ten minutes altogether.”

“ Ten minutes!” said Henry, nodding up his head.

“ Really, Mr. Villars,” said Miss Law, interfering, “ I think Miss Villars was perfectly right this time, at any rate. Colonel Maxwell is one of the most agreeable, polite, and gentlemanly persons I ever met with ; and a most excellent neighbour we shall find him, I venture to say.”

“ Of course, of course!” said Bob Law.

“ Why, he is a regular catch. Miss Villars could not have done better; and, besides that, he is one of the best fellows that ever lived—and he has bought Redlynch, stock and all, some of the most splendid animals that ever were seen; as to the ram, it’s a gem—it’s a pearl. Miss Villars was perfectly right.”

“ Well, Evelyn, I must hear all about this at dinner; it’s too late, now. We had all better go and dress.”

And the party dispersed, Miss Law hurriedly, the rest slowly.

CHAPTER VI.

To say Ay and No to these particulars, is more than to answer in a catechism.—*As You Like It.*

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverts no hollowness.

King Lear.

“Are you vexed, Henry?” said Evelyn, sitting down by her cousin in the course of the evening, as she saw that the morning’s cloud was lingering still on his brow.

“No, not particularly vexed, only sorry, Evelyn—sorry to see that you are like the rest of the world—that is, the world of women.”

“What do women do, and what have I done?” asked Evelyn, rather angrily. “What can I have done to-day, that you should call me heartless and selfish, which is what you mean, I suppose? But it is not that,” she

added, cooling down; “something is the matter with you, I am sure. You are not the least like what you were two years ago. Miss Drake thinks the same, for she said so, as we came down to dinner.”

“I’ll thank Miss Drake to hold her tongue about me, then. She is not changed, that is one thing; she made me sick two years ago, and she makes me sick still.”

“Oh, Henry! how unjust! Miss Drake is very kind and very nice; no, perhaps, not nice—that is not the word—but very kind, and I like her very much. But you are changed, Henry,” persisted Evelyn; “two years ago, you were always merry and laughing, now always.....”

“Cross, I suppose you were going to say. A great many things may happen in two years to vex one, Evelyn. Perhaps you will think so when two years more are passed.”

“Oh, no!” said Evelyn, confidently. “I never mean to be vexed, and I hope I never shall be unhappy. But will you tell me this:

are you changed—are you vexed?—or what is the matter with you?"

" What should be the matter with me? What stuff women talk!"

" Oh, very well!" said Evelyn, getting up; " if you will not talk, I had better go and be civil to Miss Law."

" Nonsense, Evelyn; Mr. Harcourt is talking to her; just sit down, will you—one never can speak a word. I was just going to talk to you to-day, and that Colonel Maxwell came and interrupted us. I was just going to ask you," he continued, after a moment's pause, " whether you remembered Miss Melville, who used to live somewhere about here."

" What, Clarice! Oh, Henry! have you seen her?"

" Yes, I met her at Rome last winter."

" Oh! why did you not tell me before? Did you make acquaintance with her? Did you like her? Is she quite beautiful? and what sort of a person is she?"

" Yes, I made acquaintance with her, and she is very beautiful. As to what sort of a

person she is, that depends upon taste. Pray don't ask such a lot of questions."

"Oh, yes, I must! just about Clarice. I am so very, very fond of her. Did you like her, Henry, and is she just like an angel, as she used to be?"

"I am not so well acquainted with angels as you appear to be. What do you mean by just like an angel?"

"Oh! so white and so pure as Clarice used to look! It is difficult to describe, but she was so quiet—so different to everybody else. I always fancy the angels must be like her, and she always gave one the feeling as if she hardly belonged to this world."

"Well, you have described her pretty well, Evelyn. She is unlike everybody I ever saw. You could not help looking at her again if you met her."

"Did you like her, Henry?" again inquired Evelyn.

"She asked a great deal about you. It was the only subject which seemed to excite her."

“ Dear Clarice ! How very nice ! I wonder if I shall ever see her again. Is there any chance of her coming back to England ?”

“ No, she said she had given up all hope of it. Mr. Melville has become used to Rome now. He has taken to antiquities and geology, and all that sort of thing ; and Miss Melville says she thinks he is happier than he was in England.”

“ And what does Clarice do ?”

“ She paints in oil and water-colours, and draws in chalks, and goes to the Galleries to copy pictures, and she plays quite beautifully. Oh ! she’s very accomplished and very clever ! She beats you, Evelyn, out and out.”

“ Ah, I dare say ! I’m not very clever, I am afraid, though papa does say that my singing is rather nice sometimes. Did you like Clarice, Henry ?” asked Evelyn, for the fourth time, totally unconscious that there had been an appearance of evading her question.

“ I tell you, liking depends upon taste,”

answered Henry, after a moment's thought. "To my mind, she is cold and heartless, as, indeed, most women are. Perhaps that might come into your character of an angel."

"Oh, no, not heartless!—Clarice is not heartless—very quiet generally; so quiet, it makes one feel quite strange with her, but not heartless. I never shall forget her the day before she went away from Cleveland. I found her in her room, crying so dreadfully—it quite frightened me."

"People may feel such a very natural thing as leaving the home of their childhood for ever, and yet be heartless in general. Depend upon it, I am right; Miss Melville may be a saint or an angel, or whatever you may please to call her, but she has no feeling."

"I am afraid you don't like her," said Evelyn, examining Henry Egerton's face.

"Now, do look at Miss Law—what can she be talking about? Poor Mr. Harcourt looks quite pale, with that woman's tongue, and

how she smiles! Do let us go and relieve him, Evelyn."

Evelyn was not very clear-sighted, and the peculiar nature of Miss Melville's heartlessness escaped her. In fact, to her, all thoughts of love and lovers were as a passing dream, and no more. She occasionally thought how much she should like somebody to be attending to her all day long; the compliment, too, of having somebody in love with her, she thought, would be, to use her favourite expression, "very nice;" for she certainly had an insatiable thirst for praise and admiration, but these were only occasional passing thoughts. Like a child, she still lived in the full enjoyment and satisfaction of the present moment. For the same reason, Bob Law's constant hints about "catching" passed unperceived over her mind. Of the devices sometimes practised to obtain husbands, she had scarcely heard, and, if she did read or hear of them, it seemed to her so unnatural, that she did not think about it. For herself, her idea of matrimony was this: some day, perhaps, she

rather hoped somebody "nice" would like her very much indeed, and if they did, why, then, she thought it was most likely that she should like them; and then, she supposed, people married.

CHAPTER VII.

So frank and wild,
Betwixt the woman and the child.

WALTER SCOTT.

Colonel Maxwell called at Wilmington the following Tuesday, and, for a wonder, Mr. Villars was at home. Though at home, however, he was just on the point of going out, and was extremely disconcerted at his neighbour's visit. After a very short conversation, therefore, he took him in to luncheon, in the earnest hope that his new acquaintance might be a luncheon-eater. In this, however, he was disappointed. Colonel Maxwell merely bowed to Evelyn and Miss Drake, declined luncheon, and still remained standing with Mr. Villars. Mr. Villars was in despair; an untimely visit to a man in a hurry is not a light

grievance. He made another desperate attempt to extricate himself.

“ We have some pretty walks about Wilmington, Colonel Maxwell ; if you would like to see something of the place, I am sure Miss Drake and Evelyn will be very happy to show it to you. I am sorry to say that I must attend a meeting of the poor law guardians, and, indeed, my time is already up.” And he glanced anxiously at his watch.

“ Thank you very much,” replied Colonel Maxwell ; “ but I am anxious to learn something of country business ; if I could be admitted at the meeting, it would give me great pleasure to go there with you.”

Mr. Villars was surprised and gratified. He consented at once, and he and his visitor left the room together.

Evelyn was piqued, but not sufficiently so to prevent her expressing her disappointment, and she treated Miss Drake and Juliet to a long and eloquent harangue on the capriciousness of men.

“ There is Henry,” she concluded, “ just

the same; I never know how to please him. Some days he seems to like me, and then he is quite cross again. In fact, I believe, Juliet, there is nobody like Mr. Harcourt;—he never changes, and I am sure I like him a great deal better than all the others put together."

Juliet smiled. Miss Drake replied, "Certainly, my dear, there is no one equal to Mr. Harcourt."

"And yet, Miss Drake, do you know, I like Colonel Maxwell better to-day than I did the other day;—that is the way, and it is so odd. Just the same if Mr. Harcourt scolds me, or if Henry is angry—I always like them the better for it. It is curious, isn't it? Is it natural, or is it unnatural?"

Miss Drake was often puzzled at Evelyn's metaphysical questions, and she was at a loss now how to answer her. She had recourse to her constant reply, "I don't know, indeed, my dear."

"I wonder if it is natural. What do you think, Juliet?"

“I think it is natural,” replied the little girl, “because I suppose, seeing that they can be displeased, makes you think more of their good opinion.”

“Ah!” said Evelyn, with an emphatic nod, “I suppose that is it. Yes, I see it is quite natural.....Do you think Colonel Maxwell handsome, Miss Drake?”

“I don’t know, my dear—I never thought.”

“How very odd you are, Miss Drake; that is always the first thing I think of; it makes so much difference! I’m afraid I don’t care much about ugly people—I mean, very ugly,” as her eyes fell on the remarkably plain countenance of her governess. “What did you think of Colonel Maxwell, Juliet?”

“I thought he was very nice-looking, Evelyn. I thought him rather like papa.”

“Like Mr. Harcourt! Oh! dear, that had not struck me; but I think I see what you mean—tall, and so quiet! I do like quiet people, though I am so noisy myself. By the bye, how I do talk! but, if nobody will speak, what is to be done?”

Evelyn was made very happy on the evening of this day, by Mr. Villars receiving an invitation from Mr. and Miss Law to meet Colonel Maxwell at dinner at Brook Lawn on the following Saturday. It was not only the pleasure of seeing Colonel Maxwell again, though that also was felt and acknowledged, but, to her fresh and childish mind, the mere act of dining out was a pleasure. Henry Egerton and Mr. Harcourt were included in the invitation, but by the former it was declined, as he was going to another house in the country for a few days' shooting."

"Now, I do expect to be happy to-night, Miss Drake," cried Evelyn, as she ran down stairs on the Saturday evening, looking upwards at her governess, who was leaning over the bannisters. "I expect to be happy, and mean to be happy—don't say that I shall be disappointed."

"I hope not, I am sure, my dear; but don't expect too much, or it may be so."

"Disappointed, indeed! what does Miss Drake mean?" remarked an old woman, who

had waited on Evelyn from her childhood, when, after taking her last admiring glance at her charge, she returned to Evelyn's room. It must be a heart of stone that would disappoint Miss Evelyn."

"Very true, Mrs. Dickens," replied the housemaid; "but," she continued emphatically, and giving a violent jerk to the window-curtain, "there are stony hearts in this world—there are."

On what experience this assertion of the housemaid's was made, as Mrs. Dickens did not inquire, it must remain enveloped in darkness.

The beginning of the evening was not very prosperous. Mr. Villars and Evelyn were both disappointed in the views they had formed. Mr. Villars had counted on Colonel Maxwell, as a stranger, being selected to take Miss Law to dinner; for although, from his strong feeling of neighbourly duty and from real regard to Bob Law, he bore with that lady with perfect civility and good temper, his real dislike was little less than Evelyn's.

Miss Law, however, knew her interest too well. However slight might be her hopes of making an impression on Mr. Villars, they certainly were stronger than any she could entertain from so young a man as Colonel Maxwell, who could not be much above thirty, and the deference and favour she was thus enabled to show to Mr. Villars must, she flattered herself, have a good effect on the mind of the latter.

As for Evelyn, she fell a victim to Bob Law, there being no other lady present. As Colonel Maxwell, however, was free, she hoped that he would place himself on her other side. What, then, were her feelings when she saw him deliberately pass the vacant seat and place himself exactly opposite to her? For a few minutes she was piqued, angry, and disappointed, and inwardly formed the heroic resolution of not caring the least what Colonel Maxwell did, but anger and disappointment were, with her, short-lived feelings; and her face was bright and sparkling as ever almost before the operation of dinner

began, although, it must be owned, her position did not promise much amusement.

After a few civil and, as he thought, lady-like speeches to Evelyn on the excellence of fish and the beauty of fishing for a lady's amusement, Bob Law entered into an animated discussion with Colonel Maxwell upon the cattle at Redlynch. Evelyn, therefore, turned her inquiring eyes upon her other neighbour. He was not outwardly attractive—grave, and pale, and fat ; and, as she did not know his name, and as he maintained a resolute silence, the prospect was not very engaging. Being, however, of opinion that any conversation was better than none at all, she, after a time, determined on venturing a question. After much thought, she began with an inquiry if he did not think Brook Lawn a very pretty place. The grave man turned towards her to answer her question ; and his face was so odd and his voice so strange, high, and shrill, that poor Evelyn, feeling nervous at the moment, was quite overcome, and went off into fits of laughing.

The grave man did not appear the least offended, but, looking kindly at her, observed that she seemed very merry.

“I beg your pardon,” said Evelyn, recovering herself, “but sometimes I cannot help laughing, and particularly when I am frightened, which I am to-night, rather, as I never dined out before.”

Her neighbour whispered to the gentleman who sate on his other side, and then again addressed her.

“I have been asking your name, Miss Villars: I hope you will forgive me—but you remind me so much of a child of my own, who was almost as gay and beautiful, and, forgive me, as thoughtless as you are.”

“Have you many children?” asked Evelyn, with awakening interest in her companion.

“No,” he replied, sadly; “I had one—the child of whom I spoke, but I have lost her.”

“I am afraid you must have thought me very rude, as well as thoughtless,” said Evelyn, her conscience beginning to smite her severely.

“Oh! no,” he said, kindly, “nothing but a little thoughtless ; and Time will soon make a great change in that one fault.”

“Do you think I shall be unhappy then ?” said Evelyn, anxiously. Sorrow, the object of her dread and abhorrence, always rose before her when people spoke of Time.

‘Life has its cares, certainly,’ returned her companion ; “and you, bright as you are, may not escape ; but it was not that I meant. I meant only that a little time would teach you to restrain your feelings of amusement when they ought not properly to be indulged. You were laughing at me,” he continued, looking at her with the kindest smile ; “confess it.”

“Dear, dear ! what scrapes one does get into in this world !” soliloquized poor Evelyn ; but it never even crossed her mind to deny the imputation. She looked up, and answered with her usual simplicity : “I am sure you thought me very rude, and I am very sorry ; but, really, I am so unused to see people, and so many things strike me as odd, that some-

times I cannot help laughing; but I will try in future."

"Always be as honest as you now are," said the grave man, gently; and, turning from her, he remained for some minutes in silence, till his reverie was interrupted by his next neighbour's addressing him.

"How very odd!" thought Evelyn to herself; "how different people are to what they seem! I never must judge by ugliness again, I suppose. I never did see such an odd face in my life, and yet I feel almost to like him better than anybody now." Being left to herself, her attention was attracted by the conversation between Bob Law, Colonel Maxwell, and another gentleman. It was almost entirely on farming; but Colonel Maxwell was so agreeable, and made such quaint remarks, that she was soon amused by listening; and, when she once or twice met his eye and he smiled at her in the midst of some of Bob Law's very long stories, she felt quite happy, and remarked to herself that dining out was very pleasant indeed.

There was, however, another disappointment in store for her. She fully expected, that, when he came up into the drawing-room, Colonel Maxwell would at least have spoken to her; but no, he stood by the fire, and entered into a long conversation with Mr. Villars; and, when that was over, and once more hope arose, he again passed her by, and sate down by Miss Law. After this she gave it up in despair, and, anxiety being over, was ready to talk with her usual good humour to anybody who was kind enough to speak to her.

Bob Law sate down by her. “ Well, Miss Villars, that was a pleasant day we spent at Redlynch; I don’t think I shall ever forget it;—I really think it was the pleasantest I ever spent in my life, because of finding Colonel Maxwell; — such a surprise! I was monstrously surprised, and that’s the truth. I did not get over it the whole night: but it was the pleasantest day, because he is the pleasantest person I ever met. What do you think, Miss Villars? Do you think my taste good?”

"Yes; I think Colonel Maxwell seems to be very agreeable."

"Yes, that's just the thing — the most agreeable person I ever met. There's Wingfield," pointing to the grave man; "he's a very good fellow — but one don't call him agreeable. Colonel Maxwell is the pleasantest person I ever met with—he knows everything —all about cattle, at his fingers' ends. You heard what he was telling us about Scotland; I'm sure, I never was so amused. That was a happy day that we found him at Redlynch; and, I'm sure, if you should ever be settled there, I shall say you are a happy woman."

"If I am what?" said Evelyn, blushing deeply.

"Ah! none so dull as those who won't understand!" replied Bob Law, with a knowing wink; "but I will say this, Miss Villars, if you should ever be that happy woman, I shall say you deserve it, and I think you do."

"What does Miss Villars deserve?" said a voice beside them.

Evelyn started, and blushed painfully in her terror that Mr. Law should explain.

Colonel Maxwell looked at her kindly, and sate down; and, with the manner almost of one addressing a child, he said, “A great deal of good, I am sure, even from the little I have seen of her, was that what you were saying, Mr. Law.”

“No, not exactly; we were talking....”

Here Colonel Maxwell observed the frightened expression of Evelyn’s face, and, interrupting the communication, he said, “No, no! don’t tell me; you must not suppose I am so curious. I remember my copy book too well. ‘Curiosity is the mark of a little mind.’ Did you ever write that copy, Miss Villars?”

“Oh! we don’t mind telling you what we were talking about,” said Bob, with another wink; “we were talking of cattle.”

“Of cattle!—I did not know Miss Villars was a judge.”

“A judge! I believe she is. Why, she knows all about it;” and then, goodnaturedly,

thinking that, as Colonel Maxwell was a catch, Evelyn would like to have him all to herself, Bob Law got up and went away.

Colonel Maxwell turned gravely to Evelyn.

“ Have you devoted your attention to this interesting study for any length of time ?”

She laughed, and made no answer.

“ Are you an admirer of fat cattle, Miss Villars, or do you hold an opinion which I have often heard ladies express, that thin cattle are much to be preferred ?”

“ You don’t really suppose that I care about that sort of thing ?” said Evelyn, almost puzzled by his gravity. “ I don’t care about any animals at all, except dogs, and perhaps you don’t call them cattle.”

“ No,” he replied, gravely, “ we don’t usually call dogs cattle. But I am disappointed,” he continued, in the same manner ; “ I thought I had at last found a woman of sense.”

“ Oh ! no, that would not have been me,” replied Evelyn ; “ papa and Miss Drake often say that they don’t think I have one grain of sense in my whole mind.”

“ Will you ask me what I think,” said Colonel Maxwell, smiling, “ in six weeks from this time, and I will then tell you exactly my opinion?”

“ Oh! yes, I should like it very much; and if you think me very stupid, you need not mind telling me, because I know I am not clever, and though I should like to be clever, I don’t so very much care about it, because I am very happy as I am.”

“ You ought to be happy, Miss Villars,” said Colonel Maxwell, with interest, “ for I am sure you must make others happy.”

“ Do you think so?” she said eagerly; “ no, I am afraid not; nobody ever told me I did. I should like to think that, very much.”

“ Which had you rather, be happy yourself, or make others happy?”

“ Oh!” said Evelyn, after pondering a moment, “ I think, be happy myself; because you know it would be no use to try and make others happy when one was all wretched and miserable oneself. It would be impossible; don’t you think so?”

“ Not impossible, I believe. I believe there are many who, with their own hearts broken, devote themselves to make others happy.”

“ I suppose you mean missionaries, and that sort of thing. Miss Drake tells me stories about them sometimes.”

“ No, not missionaries,” said Colonel Maxwell, smiling, “ that is, not only missionaries: I believe there are many men and women, but especially women, in every rank of life, who, however wretched they may be, forget themselves entirely, and devote their whole time to try and make others happy, and do make them so.”

“ Well, I cannot understand it,” said Evelyn, with a half sigh; “ if I was wretched, I am sure I should not be in a mood to make others happy: I should have to think of my poor self—and it would be natural too.”

“ But is not the whole discipline of life to teach us to conquer ourselves?” said Colonel Maxwell. “ Happy, those who profit by it—I don’t speak from experience,” he added, “ I have not done so.”

“ Are you unhappy, then ? ” asked Evelyn, with some surprise.

“ Oh ! no,” he replied, “ I only meant to say that I admire the kind of character I described, but I do not and shall not practise it. Experience, at least, tells me that if I was unhappy I should think only of myself. I am naturally selfish, and it is a very great fault.”

“ Oh ! not selfish, Colonel Maxwell, I am sure ; Mr. Law told me how kind you were to him, out shooting in Scotland. I don’t call that selfish.”

Colonel Maxwell looked gratified at her speech, but he shook his head. “ That is not the kind of selfishness I mean ; mine is on a large scale. But see, Miss Law is presiding at the tea-table,” he said, smiling ; “ will you go, and have some tea ? ”

He drew a chair for Evelyn to the table, and then went round and sate down by Miss Law, exactly opposite to her ; he seemed to have a strange pleasure in watching the changes of her April-like countenance.

Miss Law had adopted the old-fashioned

custom of a regular tea-table, not from fancy, but from her usual motive, self-interest. She felt that tea might attract many who would not otherwise seek the sphere of her agreeableness ; and it usually was the time of her triumphs.

“ Strong green tea, and neither cream nor sugar, Colonel Maxwell,” she exclaimed, as she placed a cup before him ; “ what can your nerves be made of ?—I begin to think that you are a Scotch sprite, coming and going without notice, and living independent of all human customs and feelings.”

“ Thank you, for making a monster of me !” replied Colonel Maxwell. “ I dare say I have no human feeling ; but I did not quite expect you to tell me of it.”

“ Oh ! Colonel Maxwell, you could not think I meant to say any such thing ; but let me count up your strange fancies, and then I appeal to the public if I was not justified in calling you independent of human customs. Cold water at breakfast, neither tea nor coffee, no luncheon, no bread at dinner, and green tea, without cream or sugar, at night !”

“ You are an acute observer, Miss Law ; certainly, to that degree of inhumanity, I plead guilty.”

“ Your omissions are innocent, Colonel Maxwell,” said the pale grave man, “ but injudicious.” With a forlorn attempt at a joke, he added, looking round the table, “ Does not Colonel Maxwell reject every thing that *sweetens* life ?”

“ Capital, Wingfield !” said Bob Law, whose laugh was a treasure-house to all indifferent jokers. “ What do you say to this charge, Colonel Maxwell ?”

“ I leave it to Miss Law to defend me,” he replied gravely.

“ Indeed, I think I can do no less, after my frightful speech, and happily the office is not a difficult one. When Colonel Maxwell has chosen our populous neighbourhood for the scene of his plans and improvements, does it not show that he will not reject society, which is one of the things that sweetens life ? In his own home, he surrounds himself with beauty and comfort, and beauty also sweetens life ; and, lastly, though I should rather leave

this for a gentleman to say, he does not withdraw himself from the society of ladies, of whom some poet has said, that they are ‘the sweetest gift of Heaven!’ ”

“ Admirable, Lavinia!” cried Bob Law; “what a thing it is to have a head! I suppose ladies can think of any thing; I dare say you would have been just as ready, Miss Villars.”

“ No, indeed,” said Evelyn; “if I had thought all night, I should never have thought of all that.”

“ Ah, well then, we should do to live together. Lavinia has such a head, she is always reading and quoting poetry, and all that sort of thing.”

As the party were dispersing, and Mr. Villars was having a few more words on business, with Mr. Wingfield and another gentleman Colonel Maxwell again approached Evelyn.

“ You think you would not have been able to speak as well as Miss Law?” he said.

“ No, indeed; though I am afraid I do sometimes talk a great deal too much, still, if there is any reason to speak, or, if I wish to

say something really nice, I never can think of a word."

" And you thought Miss Law's speech really nice, did you ?"

" Oh ! no," said Evelyn, hastily, " I did not like it at all. Do you think I ought to have liked it ?"

Colonel Maxwell smiled, but made no answer.

" The fact is," she continued, " that I don't like Miss Law, which I dare say is very ill-natured, but I can't help it, and so I never like anything she does."

" Satirical, Miss Villars ; I did not expect that of you—I thought you were such a good-natured person that you would like everybody."

Evelyn put up her eyes with a look of surprise that was common to her, and which had a pretty and piquant expression in her bright countenance.

" Oh ! how unlike me," she said ; " I am afraid, on the contrary, that I am very ill-natured, for I don't at all like every body. People must be really nice to please me."

“ I hope you think me ‘ really nice,’ ” said Colonel Maxwell, laughing.

She only smiled her reply, as Bob Law offered her his arm, to take her down to the carriage.

CHAPTER VIII.

Though smiles, and tears, and sun, and storm,
Still change life's ever varying form,
The mind that looks on things aright
Sees through the clouds the deep blue light.

Anon.

The following day was Sunday. After church, Evelyn went up to sit with little Juliet, who was again confined to her room, with one of those attacks which alarmed and saddened her father.

In her intervals of health, Mr. Harcourt hoped, with the strong hope of a still sanguine nature, that, as she advanced in years, she might overcome the weakness of her natural constitution; but as a month, or even a fortnight, rarely passed without some attack which reminded him of the feebleness of her

fragile frame, an increasing shade of thoughtfulness and sadness had of late stolen over his mind, still occasionally dispersed by a day of brighter looks and more elastic steps, but soon, too soon, recurring again. His fears had not yet taken the shape of hopelessness—but it was intense anxiety; and to this anxiety every thought, wish, and fancy, every favourite pursuit, every favourite amusement, was yielding. His constant and lengthened visits at Wilmington were on Juliet's account: he knew that he was ever welcome there; and, while he fancied that her eye was brighter, her smile more childlike, and her cheerfulness less forced in Evelyn's society than at any other time, he could not, without an effort, withdraw her from that sunny influence.

Juliet was lying on the sofa, with a table beside her, on which a copy of verses in writing was lying.

“ What is this, Juliet?” said Evelyn, taking up the paper.

“ It is some poetry papa wrote for me. He always copies me something every Sunday,

because he knows that I like best to learn in that way, and I have such a quantity of verses now, and papa is going to have them bound all together for me, and it will be such a nice book. These are very pretty; will you read them, Evelyn?"

The verses were as follows:

1 WILL LEAD THEM THROUGH PATHS THEY HAVE
NOT KNOWN.

How few who, from their youthful day,
Look on to what their life will be,
Painting the visions of the way
In colours soft, and bright, and free—
How few who to such paths are brought
The hopes and dreams of early thought!
For God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

The eager hearts—the souls of fire—
That pant to toil for God and man,
And mark, with eyes of keen desire,
The upland way of care and pain—
Almost with scorn they think of rest—
Of holy calm, of tranquil breast:
But God, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

A lowlier task on them is laid,
With love to make the labour light,

And there their glory they must shed
On quiet home, and lost to sight.
Changed are their visions, high and fair,
But, calm and still, they labour there:
For God, in ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

The gentle heart that thinks with pain
It scarce can lowliest tasks fulfill,
And, if it dared its life to scan,
Would ask but pathway low and still;
Often such lowly heart is brought
To act with power beyond its thought:
For God, in ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

And they, the bright, who long to prove,
In joyous way, in cloudless lot,
How fresh from earth their grateful love
Can spring, without a stain or spot—
Such youthful heart is often given
The path of grief to walk to Heaven:
For God, in ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

What matter what the path shall be!
The end is clear and bright to view;
We know that we a strength shall see,
Whate'er the day may bring to do.
We see the end, the House of God,
But not the path to that abode:
For He, through ways they have not known,
Will lead His own.

“ They are very good, Juliet,” said Evelyn, gravely, as she laid the paper down—“ very good.”

“ And yet I don’t think you like them, Evelyn.”

“ To tell you the truth, Juliet, I don’t like them. Why is everything to be so melancholy? Why is nobody to have what they wish?”

“ Papa gave them to me,” said Juliet, “ because I said last week that it was so easy for me to be good and obedient, being always quiet and not able to amuse myself; and I said I wished I could be well for a little while, and like other children, only just to show him that I could be obedient still, and he said he would give me something on Sunday to make me more contented.”

Evelyn again took up the verses. “ What I particularly object to is this: if Mr. Harcourt, or if anybody else, were to say to me over and over again that they thought it was no matter whether they were happy or miserable, I should not believe them; and why then put it here? I like the truth, Juliet.”

“ But I don’t think it quite means that, Evelyn; at least, papa said it was only to show that we could be good, at any rate, and that we ought not to worry and look forward too much.”

“ As to worrying, of course, I suppose that is wrong, if people can help it. I don’t worry, Juliet; but, as to wishing and looking forward, I do look forward, and wish for a great many, many things, and I must—I can’t help it.” Her eyes filled with tears, in her earnestness. A close observer would have remarked a slight change from her usual almost childish manner.

“ I dare say it is difficult,” said Juliet; “ but I can’t judge, for I never look forward myself, except”—she added, and a flush passed over her cheek—“ to one thing.”

“ And what is that?” asked Evelyn, with great curiosity.

The flush deepened on the little girl’s cheek, and she hesitated; then, in a very low voice, replied “ The grave!”

“ Oh, Juliet! how very naughty to talk in that way!” said Evelyn, deeply shocked, for,

to her bright nature, the very thought of death was painful. “ Does your papa know that you say such things?”

“ Oh, no, Evelyn! pray, pray don’t tell him what I said!” said Juliet, imploringly. “ I dare say I ought not to say it—I don’t know why I did. Pray, pray don’t tell him!”

“ But I think I ought,” replied Evelyn, gravely; “ and he would tell you how wrong you are to speak so.”

“ But you would make him unhappy, Evelyn, and would you do that? I feel, I think, it would make him unhappy to know how very sure I am that I never shall live to be a companion to him, as he sometimes tells me I shall be. Dear, dear Evelyn, promise me; for, you know, after all, I may be wrong.”

“ Yes, Juliet, I am sure you are!” said Evelyn, eagerly catching at the words which removed so painful an idea. “ You are so much better than you were last year, that I am sure you are wrong. Well, I will promise not to tell Mr. Harcourt for this once, if you will promise never to speak of it, or think of it again.”

“ I will promise, indeed, not to say so again,” said Juliet earnestly.

There was a silence. It was broken by Evelyn. “ So, Mr. Harcourt does wish and look forward, after all?”

“ I don’t know,” said the little girl. “ Yes, I think he does wish a little—perhaps, a little—but, I am quite sure, that, whatever happened to him, even if..... whatever it was, he never would be discontented. You don’t know, Evelyn, how good papa is!”

They were interrupted by the church bells beginning to ring. Evelyn got up. “ Well, I must go now, Juliet, for I am going to church again. I know,” she said, pausing, with her hand upon the door, “ that you and Mr. Harcourt think me very wicked; but I am not, for all that. I always—at least, almost always—go to church twice, though papa don’t, and though very often I had much rather stay at home; but Miss Drake says it is right, and I like to do what is right: so you see I am not so very bad.”

“ Bad, Evelyn!” said little Juliet. “ I am sure I think you are quite an angel.”

“ No ! do you really, Juliet ? that is very nice of you. Well, Dickens is always saying that she wishes all the world were like me : so, I suppose, I can’t be so very bad. Good bye, for the present.”

CHAPTER IX.

Her face was fair, but was not that which made
The starlight of his boyhood.

BYRON.

It was about a fortnight after Mr. Law's dinner. Colonel Maxwell was walking alone, and in deep meditation on the terrace at Redlynch. His arms were folded, and a letter was in his hand.

The letter was from Mr. Villars, containing an invitation to Wilmington for a few days. The subject of his meditation was "to be or not to be"—whether or not the invitation should be accepted.

I said Colonel Maxwell was meditating, but I should rather have said, that he was conversing with himself. His soliloquies were generally carried on under the form of a conversation, for he was one of those not very

uncommon beings who possess two characters, one in direct opposition to the other; and, as the question and answer were as distinct as if the conversation had been carried on between two persons, under that form his meditations shall be given to the public.

“This is a very kind note from Mr. Villars. I think I shall go to Wilmington.”

“Are you wise?” was the reply.

“Wisdom has nothing to do with the question. Surely, I may pay a visit, without so much consideration.”

“Has wisdom nothing to do with the question?”

“You think that, if I go to Wilmington, I shall, perhaps fall in love—perhaps, propose to—perhaps, marry Evelyn Villars. Well, even supposing such would be the case, why should I not?”

“Why should you not?” was the reply.

“You think Evelyn is not suited to me—that she is not the kind of girl I have always said I should marry?”

No answer.

“ You think that I should not be able to guide her, and that she would not be able to guide me.”

No answer.

“ You think that though the world thinks me proud, firm, even obstinate, that I am, in reality, the weakest of human beings—the weakest in resolving—the weakest in temptation?”

Still no answer.

“ Well, even granting all this, it does not follow that I require a tyrant to govern me. Evelyn’s bright innocence will keep me right.”

“ Do you love her enough for her to keep you right?”

“ Yes, I love her! I love to watch the varying expression of her face. I love to read the bright and simple innocence of her mind. She charms me.”

“ But do you love her, as you have dreamed that you could love?”

“ One does not measure love. I have always said that my wife must be an angel, not a woman—so pure, so faultless, so calm,

so strong—one on whom I should lean—whom I should rather worship than love, looking to her, as to a being above the earth and above myself. I own it—I have said this a hundred times—but what of that? I am not the first who has contradicted themselves, or, I allow it, who has been mistaken. I have chosen an angel, but one of another sort—

‘A creature not too bright or good,
For human nature’s daily food’—

an angel of a more pleasing kind.”

“You have chosen?” was the faint and sad reply.

“Yes, I have chosen; I was not sure till now that I had determined to marry her—but this opposition has shown me that my resolution is fixed—to Wilmington I go.” And with long strides Colonel Maxwell walked into the house.

It was the third evening of Colonel Maxwell’s stay at Wilmington. He and Mr. Villars stood by the fire in deep conversation. Miss Drake sat bolt upright in her chair, em-

broidering muslin in an old-fashioned tambour stitch, her usual evening's employment, which muslin was afterwards manufactured into collars and caps of the one solitary shape she possessed for those articles. During the five years that she had sate in the drawing-room at Wilmington, she had never but once been known to lean back ; and Evelyn still laughed at the recollection of the face of consternation with which she looked round wildly on the company, to discover whether or not the impropriety into which she had been betrayed by a momentary fit of absence had been observed. Henry Egerton, who had returned from his visit, was asleep in a chair. Evelyn was blundering over the stitches in her little boy's hands, and Mr. Harcourt was talking to her.

Henry Egerton and Mr. Harcourt had been out shooting all day, it being one of the rare and bright intervals of Juliet's health, and that which had thrown the one into a deep sleep had excited the other into more than common spirits. Mr. Harcourt was giving

Evelyn a lively description of a dispute which had taken place between Henry and the game-keeper.

“ I think you would have laughed, Evelyn ; it almost overcame me : of course, Britton knew best, and gave most excellent reasons why there were no partridges in Dawtrey Woods ; but Henry would not be convinced, and there we stood in the middle of the field, while he tried to prove, by equally sound arguments, why it was right to expect them to be there. When he found that Britton would do nothing but shake his head, he walked off with the little boy, and we followed, Britton repeating about every twenty yards, ‘ It’s all one to me ; but what I says is this, if he will go to look for partridges in them there woods, he might as well go for to search for a peppercorn in the Bay of Biscay.’ And it was about as useful a search.”

Evelyn’s face was raised laughingly to Mr. Harcourt. As he concluded, he saw her suddenly blush deeply, and drop her head over her work. Instinctively his eyes wandered to

the fireplace, and he heard Mr. Villars saying, —“ Then, you will stay—I should like so much to show them to you. I assure you it will give me the greatest pleasure if you will lengthen your visit.”

“ Thank you,” replied Colonel Maxwell. “ I shall be very happy to stay—I can send over to Redlynch, to-morrow.”

“ You are very glad that Colonel Maxwell stays,” said Mr. Harcourt, after a pause, to Evelyn.

“ Yes, very,” she replied, but did not raise her head.

He looked at her for a moment ; then, drawing a newspaper towards him, he began to read—as he did so Colonel Maxwell approached, and asked Evelyn to sing.

They went together to the pianoforte, which was covered with songs and music, in Evelyn’s usual careless way. Colonel Maxwell selected two songs, placed them on the music-desk, and then sate down at a little distance.

Evelyn sang the two songs, and then, as he

made no remark, chose another, one of her favourites, and sung it very prettily. It was one of Moore's, "Keep thy tears for me." As she concluded, Colonel Maxwell came to the pianoforte.

"That is very pretty," he said, taking the music in his hands and looking again at the words; "very pretty, indeed. It seems to me to express well a very natural feeling." He put down the song, and looked at Evelyn for a moment. "I should think there were many who would address you in this way, Miss Villars. You give your *smiles* to all; and those...." he paused. Though there was something of the nature of love and admiration in his manner, it partook more of the kind indulgent feeling in which a young man addresses a child.

Evelyn blushed deeply, as of late she had begun to do at his words, but she smiled and shook her head.

"But I do not wish that that should be said to me. Crying is too much like grief—I don't like grief."

“ But there are tears of joy as well as of sorrow—so, at least, it is said.”

“ It must be then joy coming after a great grief or anxiety, and I don’t wish for that, either—I wish to be happy, always. The only crying I like,” she continued, after a moment, “ is at a very sad story. Do you ever cry at books?”

“ I have once or twice been guilty of such a thing, and, as you say, it is rather pleasant, crying. Did you ever read Trevelyan?”

“ No ; is it very sad ?”

“ I think the saddest book I have ever read—and it interests me more than most novels do, because the hero is neither young and foolish, nor yet very perfect.”

“ I wonder if I might read it. Do you know,” she said, in a low confidential tone, and returning to her childish manner, “ I read very few novels ; Miss Drake is so very particular, that I very seldom can get one, and I do like them better than any thing in the world.”

“ I am afraid, then, Miss Drake might not like Trevelyan : I had better not tantalize you

any more about it — are you very obedient to her?" he said, smiling.

Evelyn pondered a moment. "Yes," she said, "if Miss Drake really orders me not to do a thing, as about books, I think I am; about little things, perhaps not quite so good. *She* is very good too," continued Evelyn, laughing; "she almost always does what I tell her."

Colonel Maxwell smiled, and soon after moving away, Evelyn saw him, to her great surprise, seat himself by Miss Drake.

CHAPTER X.

Silence is the perfectest herald of joy. I were but little happy if I could say how much.

SHAKESPEARE.

“ Well, it is very hard,” exclaimed Evelyn, as they sat at breakfast the next morning. “ Everybody, even you, Miss Drake, have got a load of letters, and not one for poor me! I am sure I don’t know what people do to get letters: I never have one!”

“ Pray, allow me to offer you mine,” said Colonel Maxwell, gravely handing her about a dozen across the table.

“ And mine,” said Mr. Villars and Mr. Harcourt, at the same moment.

“ And mine, I am sure, Evelyn,” said Henry Egerton; “ I always say, ‘ Hang—’ when I

see a letter; and I said ‘Hang,’ twice this morning, because there are two!”

Miss Drake never looked up—she was examining first the seal, then the direction, and, lastly, the outskirts of a closely-crossed letter.

The whole party were, however, very soon occupied with their letters, and Evelyn, reduced to silence, amused herself by watching the different expressions of their countenances—the self-satisfied smile of Miss Drake, as she nodded over her epistle—the careless indifference of Henry—the gravity of Mr. Harcourt—the look of intense business which Mr. Villars put on. When her survey, however, reached Colonel Maxwell, her attention was fixed, and painfully fixed.

He was reading apparently a foreign letter, and the expression of his countenance was that of anxiety and alarm—as he advanced, it deepened, and, suddenly turning very pale, he got up and hastily left the room.

Everybody looked up. “What is the matter—is Colonel Maxwell ill?”

“I am afraid,” said Evelyn, anxiously,

“ that it was something in his letter—he got quite white as he read it. Don’t you think you might go and see, Henry?” she said in a low voice to her cousin.

“ What nonsense you talk, Evelyn! one does not run after a man like a baby, because he happens to look white.”

Mr. Harcourt, without appearing to have heard this conversation, left the room.

“ I can see nothing of Colonel Maxwell,” he said, coming back, after a few minutes’ absence; “ but Woods says he thinks he went to his own room. I did not like to follow him.”

“ He felt ill, of course,” said Henry, “ and I am sure I don’t wonder, after drinking that joram of cold water.”

Breakfast was finished in silence, and one after the other the whole party left the room, probably in the hope of having their curiosity satisfied. Evelyn, however, remained; she saw that Colonel Maxwell had left his letters, and she felt no doubt that he would return. And she was right.

She was standing in one of the recesses of the windows when he came in. He was still looking pale and very grave, and without thinking of breakfast he proceeded to collect his letters. As he did so, his eye fell upon Evelyn, who was watching him anxiously. He went towards her with the letter in his hand.

“I have received some very bad news,” he said, in a low voice, “from Rome. I must go, directly. My sister Edith is dangerously ill.”

Evelyn looked up in his face. “I am very sorry,” she said, with deep but simple earnestness.

He took her hand, as if to thank her, but as he did so tears sprang to his eyes, and, hastily giving her the letter, he moved away.

He was a man whose affections were rarely touched, but, when touched, they were deep and strong; and his sister Edith he loved better than any thing on earth. They were only children, and, as is often the case with brother and sister in such circumstances, a

peculiar degree of confiding affection existed between them. There was seven or eight years difference in their age; but this rather deepened the attachment than otherwise, for a woman is almost always so much older in mind than a man. Edith Maxwell had always been her brother's standard of perfection, and his admiration for her character had made him fastidious with regard to other women; for, as she was beautiful and clever, with a strong mind and a sweet temper, it required something infinitely superior in her own style of character, or directly contrary, as Evelyn was, to attract his attention or admiration.

After a few minutes, he came back to Evelyn calm again. She attempted to comfort him.

“ I think you did not read this letter quite so quietly as I have done; it seems to me that you are too much alarmed—see, your mother says she begs you will hope.”

He shook his head. “ She says so to make my journey less sad—she knows how I.....” He broke off, then began again. “ Edith is

not strong, and breaking a blood-vessel is a fearful thing."

"But she was better after that," said Evelyn, earnestly ; "indeed, indeed you must not despair."

"You are a kind comforter," he said, gently—and as his eyes fell on her face another train of thought seemed to come to his mind. "Ah, Evelyn!" he said, taking her hand, "this is no time for words of love ; but had it been otherwise, I....."

Evelyn looked down with a deep blush, and fixed her eyes on the ground.

"But you will not forget me, Evelyn. Will you wear this ring to remind you of me, till I come again? it may be in a happier time." He drew a pretty seal-ring from his little finger, and placed it on her hand.

Evelyn looked up with her glowing cheek, and fixed her innocent, confiding eyes on his face.

At that moment a post-chaise and four drove hastily by the windows, to the hall-door.

"I must go," said Colonel Maxwell, hur-

riedly. “ God bless you, Evelyn !” With his kind, almost paternal manner, he gently raised her hand to his lips, and left the room.

In a few moments he was gone.

Evelyn wandered about the house in a strange excitement of mind; very unhappy she did not, could not feel, though she thought, considering poor Colonel Maxwell’s sad journey, that she ought to be so. She was puzzled and half dissatisfied with the turmoil, the confusion in her own mind, the necessary turmoil in the sudden transition from the thoughtless carelessness of childhood, to the consciousness of being a woman, loving, and loved. Unable to settle to any employment, she told Miss Drake that she thought she should not read that morning, and went up to Juliet’s room.

Juliet was busy with her French exercise—in her intervals of health, she applied herself vigorously to learn, partly from natural taste, but still more to please her father.

“ I am not come to disturb you, Juliet,”

said Evelyn ; “ pray go on with your writing ; but I wanted to think, and I always think I think better in this room than in any other.”

She took her embroidery-frame, and sat down in the window-seat, but thinking deepened her feeling, and soon, her needle falling from her hand, her eyes wandering over the woods and fields seen from the window, she sunk into a fit of abstraction very unusual to her.

Her reverie was so deep and earnest, that she did not hear the door open as Mr. Harcourt came in. He stood, when he saw her absent look, and watched her in silence for some minutes, and a strange expression passed over his face—then, moving hastily forward, he came to her side.

“ Evelyn,” he said to her kindly, and there was sympathy and pity in his voice.

She understood him, looked up with a momentary blush, then seized her needle, and began to work.

“ You are not unhappy, Evelyn ! only tell me that,” he said, in an anxious manner.

“ Oh, no ! very happy,” she replied, without raising her head.

Mr. Harcourt was puzzled ; for a moment he thought he had been mistaken in the signs he fancied he knew so well—while he still stood silent, with his earnest eyes fixed upon her downcast face, Evelyn looked up again, and, with a strange mixture of shyness and simplicity, began—

“ You are always so very kind to me, Mr. Harcourt, that I will not let you puzzle about me—you think I am sorry that Colonel Maxwell is gone—I am ; but see, he will come again—” and, with her eyes sparkling, and her cheek glowing, she touched the ring on her finger.—Mr. Harcourt recognised it at once.

“ Ah ! is it so indeed ?” he said, and smiled ; then, kindly taking her hand, continued, “ May you be happy, dear Evelyn. I trust you will be happy. I think you will. I will not say,” he continued, looking at her with a fond and fatherly smile, “ that I think Colonel Maxwell is worthy of you ; for I will praise you for

once, Evelyn ; but I think he will make you happy. I think he loves you.” Evelyn looked up, with tears in her eyes, to thank him. “ And when was this ?” he asked.

“ This morning,” Evelyn replied ; “ though he was so unhappy, he thought of me even then.—I don’t quite know,” she continued, “ what I ought to do ; I don’t think I ought to say anything about it ; only, that as he asked me to wear this ring, I think I ought, perhaps, to ask papa to allow me to do it. What do you think ? If you think it would be right, dear Mr. Harcourt, I can speak so much better to you, would you be so very kind as to ask him for me ; and just to say that I was frightened to ask him myself.”

“ Willingly, dear Evelyn ; that or any thing else you wish.”

“ Thank you very much,” she said. “ And now, please don’t ever say anything more about it, unless I get a little tired of not talking to anybody — because I don’t quite think I ought.”—As she spoke, she got up, and took her work-frame in her arms—“ Ah, Juliet,”

she said, smiling, “ I forgot you quite—and have you heard all I said ? But never mind,” she added, as she bent and kissed her, and then left the room.

Mr. Harcourt still stood by the window. Juliet looked anxiously at his thoughtful appearance ; then, climbing upon a chair near him, she threw her arms round his neck—“ Are you sorry, papa ?” she asked.

Mr. Harcourt looked at her seriously and surprised. “ Why, Juliet, should I be sorry ?”

Juliet blushed slightly, and said nothing. He replied, steadily—

“ I am both glad and sorry—any change in Evelyn’s bright life makes me sad ; for she can hardly be happier than she now is. Life has begun for her with its cares as well as its joys ; but it has begun, I trust, happily. I have every reason to think well of Colonel Maxwell.”

Juliet returned to her writing, and Mr. Harcourt sate beside her, and began to correct her exercise.

Mr. Villars willingly acquiesced in Evelyn's request, to be allowed to wear the ring. He was, in fact, extremely delighted—he had taken an unusually strong fancy to Colonel Maxwell.

He took no notice, however, of the subject, except that, on his first meeting with Evelyn, after the communication had been made to him, he tapped her on the cheek, and asked her, "if she was going to practice being a good wife and housekeeper."

And Evelyn was soon entirely left to her own thoughts. Henry Egerton returned in a day or two to London, and the following week Mr. Harcourt and Juliet went home, Mr. Harcourt, however, promising to return in a month or six weeks, to spend, he said, with rather a sad smile, "perhaps Evelyn's last Christmas at Wilmington." But she was happy—not perhaps so merry as she had been, but very happy. The following lines describe something of the change that stole imperceptibly over her mind and manner—something of the change, not an exact pic-

ture—for Evelyn's nature was, perhaps, too light, and too bright, for a “deep and awful shadow” ever to pass over it.

And she was changed from what she was—no more
Her careless gaiety of heart she bore;
No more her spirit bounded light and free,
As summer bird singing so merrily.—
A passion in her soul had dawned, and cast
Its deep and awful shadow as it passed.
And, though more blest than thought or tongue could
tell,
She knew to youth's bright joy she bade farewell.

* * * * *

Through the deep woods around her native home,
With calmer, stiller tread, her footsteps roam;
She gazed on earth as she had gazed before,
But not the same was the bright smile it wore.
Each tree, and herb, and flower, to her thought,
Seemed with a deeper life and beauty fraught;
As though each thing she saw in part, could share
Of her heart's depths the feeling bursting there.

PART THE SECOND.

CHAPTER XI.

L'absence c'est à l'amour ce qui est au feu le vent,
Il eteint le petit, il augmente le grand.

“ You look sad, George,” said Edith Maxwell, to her brother. “ I am afraid, after all, that your hurried journey has knocked you up.”

The brother and sister sate in one of the numerous beautiful gardens which I believe surround the city of Rome. It was the latter end of October, but the earth and sky were still in all the brilliancy of summer.

Colonel Maxwell sighed, and passed his hands over his eyes—“ You make no allowance, Edith, for the change from despair to joy. What I have gone through leaves its shadow still upon my mind. It is almost

beyond one's power to pass so quickly from one state to another."

Edith looked up at her brother—"Do you really care so much about me, George? how ungrateful I am, for I am always fancying that you forget us."

He made no answer.

"Did mamma write so hopelessly?" continued Edith; "she told me she thought she had not done so."

"I don't know what she wrote, Edith; I know what I thought—but I am not one to take a bright view of things. I never hope for good, if there is a chance of evil."

"Then that is very wrong of you," said Edith, smiling; "don't you know that people say that such a propensity shows something bad in the disposition? You remember the Spanish proverb, "Guardate di aguel que no tiene esperanza de bien."

"I don't know what it is a sign of," replied Colonel Maxwell; "I know why I never hope—I don't deserve good to come to me—I feel that I don't, and therefore I don't expect it."

“ What do you mean, George? you are always saying something of this kind,” said Edith, anxiously.

“ I hardly know myself what I mean—I don’t know that I am actually worse than other people; but I know that whatever I wish for I must have—whatever I am tempted to do I do. I seem to have no power of resisting my own wishes—and so I have no confidence in myself. This is a painful feeling, Edith,” he continued, thoughtfully, “ both for the past and for the future—for the past, because I have nothing to look back upon with satisfaction—for the future, worse still: a sort of constant distrust—a doubt, if the temptation came, whether I should not do something that I should abhor myself for. But it can’t be helped,” he said, smiling at her anxious look; “ if you will come and live with me, I shall do pretty well. I don’t think I could bear that you should scorn me. Shall we walk? The sun is sinking—it is quite cool now.”

They wandered about, talking on many

subjects. "Now tell me about Redlynch," said Edith; "you seem so fond and so proud of it, I should like to hear more about it."

Colonel Maxwell's head was turned away, and he did not answer her. Edith repeated her question.

"I beg your pardon, Edith; I did hear you, but I was looking at that lady—can you tell me who she is?"

It was a tall, slight, and very fair girl, who crossed a path before them. She was walking with a short, ill-dressed, foreign-looking woman.

"I forget her name," replied Edith; "she was pointed out to me one day as a great artist. They say her drawings are wonderful—stay, I think her name is Melville, or something of that kind. She is very pretty—but almost too fair; don't you think so?"

"Pretty!" said Colonel Maxwell, and his eyes followed the figure; but, rousing himself, "you were asking about Redlynch, Edith."

When once our attention has been attracted to any subject or by any object, it is strange

the way in which we are haunted by it. Colonel Maxwell met Miss Melville every day; and the uncommon admiration which he had felt for her beauty, and the kind of attraction with which he appeared to be drawn to observe her, increased. And, so far as her beauty was concerned, it was not extraordinary that it should be so; for it was certainly remarkable in its faultless perfection. Her complexion was dazzlingly fair — her features were as pure and regular as if they had been carved in marble; and the calm, angel-like tranquillity which an artist had remarked in her childhood still rested upon her countenance. It might have been thought almost too fair, too regular, but for the expression of her eyes, which, in some degree, detracted from the Madonna-like character of her face. Those dark grey eyes had an intensity of thought, a seriousness, calm, and yet mournful, which cast a human shadow over her pure beauty, and seemed to assure you, which otherwise you might have doubted that she too was a creature with like passions as ourselves.

“I wish you knew Miss Melville, Edith,” said Colonel Maxwell, one day to his sister, after they had passed Clarice in their daily walk.

“I wish I did, George, as you seem to be so much struck by her appearance.” Looking up in his face, she added, laughingly, “I really think you have fallen in love at first sight.”

“Not at all,” he replied, with a gravity that was scarcely needed; “but I never saw a face of such faultless beauty, unless, perhaps, in some of the Madonnas of Fra’ Angelico or Perujino: and I have a strong desire to know whether her mind answers to the character of her face.”

He was destined to have an opportunity of satisfying his curiosity.

He went one morning with his sister to see the collection of pictures in the Barberini Palace. On their first entrance, they observed Miss Melville. She was seated before the head of an old saint, of which she was making a copy in chalks. Her eye never wandered from her occupation; nor did she appear to be

disturbed, so entirely she was engrossed in her drawing, by the many strangers who stopped to watch the progress of the slight but masterly sketch that she was making.

Colonel Maxwell and Edith wandered round the room ; after a time, the latter was tired ; and, as her brother was not satisfied, she offered to sit down and wait for him.

He had not left her many minutes, before an old man, an acquaintance of Edith's, came into the room. He saw her, and was coming towards her, but stopped on his way to speak to Miss Melville. He examined her drawing, and, by his gestures, appeared to be expressing unbounded admiration. When he joined Edith, his mind was still full of her.

“That is a wonderful girl,” he said. “Young as she is, she is the very first lady artist of my acquaintance. The sketch she has made to-day Rafaelle himself need not have scorned.”

Edith thought of her brother's wish. “Does she allow her drawings to be seen ?” she asked.

“Have you never seen them ? Oh ! no,

you don't know her; but I am sure she would be delighted to show them to you. Come along—come with me."

He drew her towards Clarice, who got up, as the old man named Edith's wish; and, at his request, put her drawing into his hand. He fell into ecstasies again, and pointed out its different merits, the boldness, the correctness, the touch, the expression. Edith joined in his admiration; then, satisfied with having fulfilled her brother's wish, and fearful of disturbing Miss Melville, she thanked her and turned to go, but her companion stopped her.

"As you are here, you shall see some more. I see your portfolio down there, Miss Melville; do let us have it. I don't apologize for disturbing you, for you have too much time to yourself. Do, my dear Miss Melville, give me the pleasure of showing Miss Maxwell your drawings." Clarice smiled, and lifted the portfolio from the floor.

Edith glanced round, and saw that Colonel Maxwell had returned, and was watching her with surprise. Turning to Clarice, she

pointed him out, and asked leave for him to join them.

The old man, delighted to have another spectator, scarcely waited for Miss Melville's consent; but beckoned to him to approach, and, though he was himself unacquainted with Colonel Maxwell, introduced him to Clarice.

With a strange feeling of pleasure, the latter placed himself by her side; and, as his eye wandered over the drawings, his mind was entirely absorbed by the young artist herself.

It is difficult to describe the impression which Clarice made; many might—many did—pass her by, and call her a beautiful statue, and no more; but, if once attention was excited, if once you watched her, she exercised a kind of fascination over you. You could not but listen to the sweet lingering accents of her voice; you could not but watch the blush which slowly rose and deepened on her cheek—in all her movements, if it is not a contradiction to say so, there was a repose, which had upon you something of

the effect of music. She was striking now, as she stood so quietly and silently listening to her praises with a manner as far removed from vanity as it was from shyness and awkwardness; nothing is so difficult as to hear your own praises gracefully,—where there is one lurking thought of vanity, it will betray itself; but, in Clarice, there was a perfect simplicity, an utter unconsciousness; not like Evelyn's, a transparent simplicity, but a quiet, self-possessed unconsciousness, as uncommon and striking in its way.

At the end of the portfolio were two water-coloured sketches, more carelessly and roughly done than the rest of the drawings. Clarice was closing the book, but Colonel Maxwell took one of them in his hand.

“Those are English views,” said Clarice; “they were done many years ago.”

“Can I not name them?” said Colonel Maxwell, smiling, “Redlynch, and,” taking up the other, “Cleveland.”

“Do you then know Cleveland?” asked Clarice; and a blush of pleasure lit up her

countenance. For the first time, she raised her head, and fixed her earnest eyes upon Colonel Maxwell.

Their expression seemed to touch his soul, and, for a moment, his fascinated gaze rested on her face; then, hastily withdrawing it, he replied, "Cleveland I have seen—Redlynch I know well; it is now my own home;" then, with a sudden thought, he continued, "you then must be the Miss Melville who is so remembered, so regretted at Cleveland."

"Are we remembered still? Yes, we lived there once, but it is now many years ago." She seemed anxious to ask more, then changed her mind, closed the portfolio, and replaced it on the floor.

Edith glanced at her brother, then, after again thanking Miss Melville, turned to go.

Clarice held out her hand. "Will you come to see us?" she said, timidly but earnestly. "Mamma is always at home, and almost always alone; and, if you would come and tell us some news of our own country, it would make us both very happy."

“I must not come upon false pretences,” said Edith, smiling; “I have never been in Hampshire, but my brother talks of nothing else; and, if you will allow us, we will come together.”

They moved away.

“Well, George,” said Edith, presently, “does your beauty answer your expectations?”

“Whether she answers *all* my expectations,” he replied, “must remain for further acquaintance to show; they will not easily be satisfied.”

“I see, George,” she said laughing, “that you will be thoroughly in love before your examinations are finished. Take care of yourself.”

“Really, Edith,” said her brother, with a heightened colour, “I had thought that you were not like common women, who are always thinking of love, if the smallest expression of interest or admiration escapes one’s lips. I admire Miss Melville as I admire that,” and he pointed to a beautiful head of a Madonna near which they stood; “and such a feeling

is not only distinct from love, but I should suppose very rarely leads to it."

"We have often argued about love," said Edith, shaking her head, "and you know that I don't always agree with your theories. I should have said that your opinion to-day contradicts your usual one; but, be that as it may, my views are more simple and more correct too. I believe *any* interest can lead to love. I don't mean to say," she added, seeing that he looked really annoyed, "that you are in love with Miss Melville. I will say no more, if you dislike it. I warned you more in joke than anything else, because I certainly never saw you so much struck by anybody's appearance before."

"I do dislike it—I hate the kind of conversation; it worries me to death to have such observations made upon everything I do." He spoke impatiently; then, seeing that Edith looked surprised and sorry, he added, "but I don't mean to be cross, Edith; you can't know why your words should annoy me. I only mean that there

are very good reasons why I should not be in love with Miss Melville; and yet, I suppose, I may admire her beauty, for all that. But you look pale and tired," he continued, kindly: "how selfish I am to forget that you are still so weak! Let us go home."

Colonel Maxwell and Edith called on Mrs. Melville the next day. She was at home and alone.

Mrs. Melville was the strangest person to be Clarice's mother. She was not vulgar —far from it; she was not bustling, nor awkward, nor talkative, nor silent; but she was commonplace: and her present life, and the very fact of her being Clarice's mother, made her shallow, trifling mind, and cold good breeding, more apparent than in other circumstances it might have been.

She was very civil, and met her new acquaintances with great kindness.

"Thank you for calling so soon. This is really kind. My daughter told me of her meeting with you yesterday, and of your having lately come from Hampshire. We live very

quietly in general. My health does not permit me to mix much in society, but I am very happy to make your acquaintance. But I must send for Clarice; she would be sorry to miss you. She is engaged in drawing at this moment; but she will be glad to be disturbed when there is a chance of hearing of her dear Cleveland.” She rang the bell. Edith spoke in terms of warm admiration of Miss Melville’s drawing. “What a pleasure it must be,” she ended, “to have such a talent!”

“ You are very kind;—yes, it is, indeed, a great resource to Clarice. We live very quietly, but she never appears to find it dull. She goes almost every day to one or other of the collections, and she has made some beautiful copies in all styles of painting and drawing. I believe her talent is much admired here. Annette, the person who is constantly with her, tells me that a great number of strangers are attracted by it. She says they crowd round Clarice’s chair, but I don’t know whether it is the case; my daughter never mentioned it.”

“I think we saw something of it yesterday,” observed Colonel Maxwell.

“Indeed! Probably, then, Clarice does not remark it. She is always so much engrossed by anything that interests her, whether it is her book, or her drawing, or her music. She does not care much for society, or, at least, only for the society of a few, and those her own countrymen. By the bye, talking of England — so you have really seen Cleveland. Colonel Maxwell, how does it look? — Just the same, I suppose, as when we left it.”

“It appeared to me to be in great beauty — the autumnal tints give so much variety. I think all places look well in the autumn.”

“Yes, indeed — and in the spring, too. The summer I find too hot; everything looks burnt up, at least in Italy. But I suppose it is not so in England. I have almost forgotten an English summer. And are there any changes in our part of the country? Have we a railroad near us?”

“None within fifteen miles.”

“ Dear ! how inconvenient!—at least, I have no reason to say so, as we have no railroads here at present ; but all my English friends appear to lament if a railroad does not pass their hall-doors.”

“ Do they, indeed ?” said Colonel Maxwell.

“ Yes, I assure you they do ;—many of my friends have made exactly that remark ; but it *is* a convenience, you know. What a very rapid mode of conveyance a railroad is, Colonel Maxwell !”

“ Very, indeed,” he replied, gravely—then, thinking he would do the railroad business thoroughly, he remarked further, “ What would our great grandfathers say if they could suddenly rise from their graves to see us ?”

“ Ah, true ! What would they say ? When I think of my poor grandfather, drawn about in his gouty chair—it would be a surprise, indeed.”

Edith bit her lip, and looked down to conceal her amusement. They were inter-

rupted and relieved by the appearance of Clarice.

She was still more striking at home than in her walking dress, for her bonnet concealed the beautiful classical shape of her head and neck. Her fair—you could scarcely call it pale—complexion, so smooth, and fresh, and transparent as it was—her bright golden hair, which was loosely turned back from her face, together with her white dress and light blue ribbons, gave a kind of ethereal look to her appearance, as if she scarcely was a creature belonging to this world.

She sat down; and Edith, guessing her brother's wish, immediately began a conversation with Mrs. Melville.

Colonel Maxwell drew near to Clarice. "I am afraid that we have disturbed you," he began. "Mrs. Melville said you were drawing."

"I was drawing, but I have plenty of time for that; and it is not often that I have an opportunity of hearing of England. I was very glad that mamma sent for me."

“ You are very fond of England, then ?”

“ Yes, very fond ; will you tell me about Cleveland ? Did you really say that we are still remembered there ?”

“ The gardener talked to me a great deal about you all—but especially about yourself, Miss Melville. It seemed to be with a gardener’s regrets, for he said that his labours had not been half so well appreciated since you went away : but the person who was most eloquent in her remembrances and her sorrow was an old woman at the Lodge. I was detained there for half an hour, by a thunder-storm : and I assure you the time was pleasantly passed—there was such honest sincerity and true feeling in all she said. Among other kindnesses which she remembered, she told me that, once when she was confined to bed for a whole year, the young lady never missed going to see her any day through the whole time, though she was then only eleven years old. Do you remember the circumstance ?”

Clarice smiled—then, shaking her head,

said, "I am afraid it will make me regret Cleveland too much to talk to you. When I think how different my life is now, I....." she stopped. "I hope you admired the place: perhaps I should think otherwise, if I was to see it again; but now, even after all the beauty of Italy, I still find myself thinking of Cleveland as the greenest and loveliest spot in the world."

"I admired it very much—second only to my own home, Redlynch—and, perhaps, if Cleveland had been my own home, I should have given that the preference."

"I suppose you know all the country round very well—you know Wilmington?"

"I don't know much of the country, for I have not been much above a month at Redlynch, and the principal part of that time was spent at home, in inspecting my new purchase; but I have seen Wilmington—it is very inferior to both Cleveland and Redlynch."

"Yes, outwardly; but it has a beauty which they cannot have. You must have seen Evelyn Villars? If she is now what I remem-

ber her, she must make Wilmington an enviable place. I always thought that her smiles would make me happy in a dungeon. I have seen nothing like her in Italy."

"She has indeed a beautiful and sunny face, and I should think it was but the true expression of her mind. But do you dislike Italy so very much, Miss Melville?"

"Oh no, I like it; but I cannot, as papa and mamma do, prefer it to England."

"And have you no hope of going back there?"

"Very little. Sometimes I think I shall never see it again, except in my dreams," she added, slightly smiling. "I often dream of Cleveland, inhabited by some of the strange people we meet with here."

"Who do you dream about, my dear Clarice?" said Mrs. Melville, whose small talk with Edith was drawing to a close.

"Only England, mamma," replied Clarice.

"Ah! yes, we often think of England—we were talking of it, Clarice, when you came in. Colonel Maxwell was telling me that there

are no railroads in our part of the world, which must be very inconvenient."

As they appeared to be returning to the point from which they set out, Edith looked at her brother, and they both got up.

Mrs. Melville was extremely civil in pressing them to call again, and apologized for not being able to return their visit, as she very rarely went out. Her health did not, or she fancied it did not, permit of many acquaintances. Naturally indolent, the life in Italy suited her exactly; and she had one of those strangely complacent minds, which find in themselves all they desire—not from the fullness of their own minds, but from the narrowness of their desires.

CHAPTER XII.

Gentil mia donna, io veggio
Nol mover dè vostri occhi un dolce lume,
Che mi mostre la via che al ciel conduce.

PETRARCA.

Mr. Melville and Clarice returned the visit of her son and daughter to Mrs. Maxwell.

The quietness of Colonel Maxwell's manners had made so favourable an impression on Mrs. Melville's mind, whose favourite virtue was good breeding, that she had spoken warmly in his praise to her husband; and Mr. Melville finding him well informed in all the arts and sciences to which he was devoted, and disposed to listen to his ideas on these subjects, no inconsiderable acquisition in a companion, not only confirmed Mrs. Melville's opinion, that he was a perfectly well-

bred gentleman, whom she would be glad to see occasionally, but declared that he was as clever a fellow as ever he met with, and that the oftener he came to them the better he should be pleased.

Colonel Maxwell's visits, therefore, were frequent; and blindly he rushed into the snare that appeared to be laid for him. I say blindly, for he did not pause to consider—but it was a wilful blindness; for he might have, should have, asked himself what powerful attraction it was which daily drew his steps to Mr. Melville's house, if not to enter it, yet to pass it, with the hope of at least seeing Clarice. He might have asked himself what sudden patience and good temper had sprung up within him, to make him so tolerant of Mr. Melville's eternal discussions on painting and antiquities—discussions which seemed, in their dryness and insipidity, to strip every object he approached of its life and its beauty. He might have asked himself, why his heart beat with excitement, if Clarice came suddenly into the room; why, in her

presence, Mrs. Melville's cold and trifling good breeding neither amused nor wearied him ; but he was blind, wilfully blind. He did not, because he would not, consider that, in the way in which his steps were leading him, temptation was lying.

His favour with Mr. Melville increased so much, that, about ten days after their first acquaintance, the latter one day surprised his wife, by informing her that he had invited Colonel Maxwell to dinner—an almost unprecedented mark of regard.

And Clarice ; what were her feelings during this time ? Was the blush that rose upon her cheek, when she heard of the invitation having been given and accepted, the token of some inward feeling rising in her mind ? It might be so, though, as yet, unconsciously.

The dinner at Mr. Melville's would, certainly, in general, have been thought dull. Colonel Maxwell was the only guest, and Mr. Melville the chief speaker. He had been a bore when a country gentleman in England, and he was become a very great

bore now that he had set up for a man of taste ; but Colonel Maxwell, seated opposite to Clarice, was perfectly happy ; it was enough for him to dwell upon her angelic face, to meet her eye, to cause her smile, to watch the faint, slow blush, that continually stole over her face.

After dinner, Mr. Melville slept, Mrs. Melville took up her worsted work, and Clarice was sent to the pianoforte.

Colonel Maxwell remained for some little time endeavouring to amuse Mrs. Melville ; but, as conversation flagged, he availed himself of a pause in Clarice's music, and went towards her at the other end of the room.

“ Mr. Melville tells me that you went to hear a service at a convent this morning,” he began ; “ were you pleased with it ?”

“ No, I was rather disappointed. The music was fine ; but a religious ceremony, without any religious feeling, must be painful to see, and there was that great want to-day ; even the music, beautiful as it was, was sung without feeling.”

“ I am afraid that you will often be disappointed, then,” replied Colonel Maxwell. “ I don’t suppose that you would find much religious feeling in a convent.”

“ Why do you say so?” she asked, with interest. “ Have you seen any very bad ones? I have seen some convents which, certainly, do not merit what you say; one or two, those belonging to the Sisters of Charity, have answered even the very high idea which I have formed of them.”

“ Ah, yes! the Sisters of Charity are, indeed, an exception. I have always seen them with the greatest admiration; theirs is true self-denial, and more—it is an utter forgetfulness of self.” He paused, and a cloud went over his brow, as he continued; “ I never feel that I have a right to praise such a character, but self-denial and self-forgetfulness are the virtues that I most prize, and I am afraid I must add, the least practise.”

“ I suppose they are virtues in which we all fail more or less,” replied Clarice. “ You don’t know,” she added, after a moment’s

thought, "how I have sometimes wished to be a Sister of Charity."

"But do you not think that self-denial may be practised equally well in the world as in a convent?"

"Yes, oh, yes! I think if we now lived at Cleveland, I should not be so dissatisfied with my life; but you do not know how useless I am here. Papa and mamma take too great care of me—it is nothing but self," she said, with her quiet smile, "all day long."

"Then, must not your self-denial," said Colonel Maxwell, smiling also, "be to allow yourself to be indulged—to please those to whom it is a pleasure to think of you? Have you this convent fancy now?" he asked, after a moment, with some interest.

"Sometimes, a little; but not as I once had. Still, sometimes, I wish that I had been brought up in that church, where my becoming a Sister of Charity would not have been remarkable."

"But, surely, Miss Melville," he continued, uneasy, he scarcely knew why, at the very

mention of such a fancy, “even supposing it had been so, you, an only daughter, would not think it right so to leave your home.”

“No,” she said, “you are right; and yet, how inconsistent we are! If I had been able to go into a convent, and had done so, I suppose, in such circumstances as mine, it might have been called heartless and unnatural; but, if I had married and gone to India, for twenty years, or even for life, I believe none would have called that heartless, whatever I might think myself.”

“No, because they would have seen that it was a higher love, overcoming even the love of your parents and your home.”

“And might not the same excuse,” said Clarice, earnestly, “be made for a convent life? Must an earthly love always be stronger than a heavenly one?”

“I fear so,” said Colonel Maxwell. As he spoke, his eyes fell on her countenance, so pure, so lovely, and a pang shot through his heart, as he thought, “Surely, she cannot be destined for a life on earth!”

There was a pause. After a time, he began again—"I must still say something in preference to your going to India, Miss Melville—'It might be for years, or it might be for ever,' as the song says; but, still, you *could* return—a convent encloses for ever."

"Going to India, my dear Clarice!" said Mrs. Melville, with a concealed yawn. "What can you be talking of?"

Clarice moved to the other side of the room, and sat down. "Oh, no, mamma! we were only having an argument about convents, and you would agree with Colonel Maxwell, for he does not seem to like them."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Melville; "no sensible Protestant does, excepting yourself, my dear child. Do you know, Colonel Maxwell, that, about two years ago, I was quite alarmed, for fear Clarice should do some strange thing, she used to have such an admiration for self-denial, and all that sort of thing; but I think it is quite gone off now."

"What is gone off, mamma?" said Clarice, with a smile, but it was rather a sad one. "Do

you think that I don't admire self-denial now?"

"I don't know about that, but you don't speak as foolishly as you did about it. I thought what you said this morning very sensible. For my part, I have no patience with nuns; I never had."

"Nor I," said Mr. Melville, waking, "except in a picture; it is a very fine subject for the arts. Nothing is more effective than eyes turned up, and hands clasped; and even crosses and rosaries look well when judiciously introduced. I have sometimes thought of having Clarice painted as a nun, Colonel Maxwell. Her style of features would be suitable to the dress and the subject; but she objects, I think foolishly. What do you think of the idea?"

"I at least should be sorry to see it," replied Colonel Maxwell, gravely, and his eyes unconsciously rested upon Clarice.

She slightly blushed, then got up to fetch her work, and the subject was dropped.

CHAPTER XIII.

The more I think, the wilder grows my brain,
And every thought is stamped with her bright image.

MILMAN.

“ I am sorry, Edith,” said Colonel Maxwell, one morning, as he hastily got up from breakfast, “ that I cannot walk with you to-day. You know, I have promised to go on this expedition with Mr. Melville. I hope you will not mind.”

“ I am sure I should be very ungrateful to mind,” replied his sister; “ you have walked with me almost every day since you came, and I dare say you will again.”

“ Not very often, I am afraid. I must go back to England in a few days.” He spoke in rather a melancholy tone.

“ Back to England, George, so soon!” said

Edith, in some surprise. "Oh! surely you need not go yet!"

"I am afraid it must be so," he said, with a half sigh, and he walked to the door. When he had opened it, he looked back, and added, "I am sure, Edith, I am sorry to go; for I have been happier than I am often likely to be again."

"Going," thought Edith. She had watched the progress of the intimacy between her brother and Miss Melville, and had smiled at her own foresight, in guessing how it would end; but she had studiously avoided the subject. Now, however, it struck her that, after all, Colonel Maxwell might have spoken the truth, in saying that admiration for her character and for her beauty was all that he felt for Clarice, and that, in the consciousness of safety to himself, he was unconscious of whether he was leading her. She determined, for Clarice's sake, once more to approach the subject; for that Clarice was very far from indifference, she had for some time suspected. The day before this one, she and Colonel Maxwell

had met Miss Melville in their walk, and the blush and start she gave were unlike Clarice's usual quiet manner. These might, however, have proceeded from other feelings ; but Edith thought she could not be mistaken in the interest with which she seemed almost to hang on her brother's words, in the glow, the light of pleasure which passed over her face, when he mentioned that he had been invited by Mr. Melville to join their party to , and she had seen it with satisfaction ; for, till this moment, she had never doubted what his feelings towards Miss Melville were.

I am not acquainted with the environs of Rome, but some beautiful spot there must be, where lovers have wandered before now, and wandered regardless of the beauty around them, from the superior interest in the emotions of their own minds. In such a spot, Colonel Maxwell, lingering behind the rest of the party, walked with Clarice Melville by his side. The day was beautiful, but, even in the midst of the beauty of the earth around them,

and the enjoyment from the clear, inspiring air, the thoughts of Clarice had wandered to her native land.

They had been talking of England, and there came a silence ; it was broken by Clarice suddenly exclaiming, “ But you speak so little of Evelyn Villars ; if she is now what she used to be, and as I fancy, from Mr. Egerton’s account, that she must be, I should have thought that she was a person to rave about.”

“ She is very bright and beautiful,” replied Colonel Maxwell, abstractedly.

“ I don’t mean only her beauty, but her mind, her character, must be so uncommon.”

“ Yes,” he replied, in the same musing manner, “ she has a simplicity of character which is very peculiar.”

“ And do you not admire it ?” said Clarice, struck with his manner.

“ It is very pleasing,” he said ; “ but I *admire* a higher kind of character than hers.”

“ But what can be higher ?” said Clarice, earnestly ; as Henry Egerton had said, Evelyn Villars was the only subject which seemed to

excite her. “ I cannot fancy anything higher than that transparent truth ; so few people do —so few dare to speak as they think.”

Colonel Maxwell roused himself. “ Miss Villars has the innocence and unconsciousness of a child,” he said, gravely ; “ but, do we not fancy that the innocence of an angel is higher than that of a child ? ” He paused a moment, then continued, not looking at Clarice, but as if he was arguing with some idea in his own mind. “ There are some who have the purity of angels, who can see and pity the errors which they know not themselves—some who, whether in the temptations of joy or of sorrow, seem to live above this world, and their fellow mortals know not whether to love or to worship them.”

“ But are there such ? ” said Clarice, and she raised her own angel face to his.

“ I have often dreamed of such, Miss Melville, but I knew not till now that they were to be found on earth. I have found one now —have I not ? ” And he looked at her for an answer, with an earnest gaze.

A deep blush rose on Clarice's cheek ; but she looked up again, to reply to him. Though his words were almost words of love, there was a gravity and respect in his manner which seemed to take from them such a meaning. "I will not pretend to misunderstand you," she said, quietly ; "you think you have described what I am, but you are mistaken. I am not so much above the world and its temptations as you have imagined."

He shook his head ; words were rising to his lips which he dared not trust himself to speak.

"I am sometimes afraid that I am a hypocrite," continued Clarice, "for I see so plainly that I appear to be better than I am. I think," she began again, as he still was silent, "that I could bear a great deal of sorrow — I have always thought so ; but there is one temptation that I fear I should not have strength to bear."

"And what is that?" he asked, with great interest.

"Joy," she replied ; "very great earthly happiness."

“ Are you not happy now, Miss Melville?”

“ Yes....oh! yes, very happy—but I mean, *great* happiness.—I hardly know how to express what I mean—but I feel that there must be a happiness greater than I have yet known.”

“ Perhaps,” said Colonel Maxwell, in a troubled voice, “ you mean the happiness that love can give?”

“ Perhaps,” she replied : “ I think my fear is, that any fresh tie should bind me to the world. I fear that I am weaker than even I myself can tell. I have been so little tried.”

“ And should you shrink from the trial?” asked her companion, earnestly.

“ I cannot tell,” said Clarice. After a moment, however, she continued—“ I suppose, if it came naturally, one ought not to shrink from it. There must be a means of overcoming all temptation.”

Colonel Maxwell made no answer, but the gravity of his brow increased. To overcome temptation was not at that moment a thought pleasing to his mind. They walked on in silence and joined the rest of the party; and

Clarice Melville was unconscious that even, while she spoke, a tie was binding round her heart stronger than she had ever even dreamed of.

It was late when Colonel Maxwell went home. As he slowly walked up the stairs, he heard his sister still singing, in the room where they usually sate, and for a moment he thought of hastening to bed, for he felt but little disposed for conversation ; but the next instant his heart reproached him for his unkindness, and he opened the door.

Edith got up from the pianoforte.

“ Mamma has got a headach, and is gone to bed,” she said, “ but I felt sure that you would soon come home.”

“ Pray, go on singing, Edith,” said her brother, throwing himself into a chair ; “ for I am not in a humour for talking.”

She went back to the pianoforte, and sang song after song, principally the melodies of her own country, which, even in Italy, pleased her more than all others ; some songs were in praise of constancy, some were upbraidings or

lamentations for falsehood, but every one struck as a dagger on Colonel Maxwell's soul. At last he got up, threw open the window, and leant out. Edith joined him.

“What a beautiful night,” she said, looking out; “and what a day you have had—I hope you have enjoyed it?”

“Very much,” he said, with a sigh; “but I am tired. But don't come to the window, Edith. It is very fine, but there is rather a chill, and it will not suit you.”

“Then I wish you would move, too, George, for I really do wish to speak to you.” She spoke gravely.

He shivered—not at the chill of the night air, but at the dread of what might be coming, the terror of having to face the secrets of his soul. He closed the window, however, and sate down again.

“Do you still think of going to England?” she began.

“What can it matter to you, Edith?” he said, impatiently. “I have not made up my own mind. Yes—I suppose I shall go.”

“ Matter to me!—but I know you don’t mean what you say, George—I dare say you think me very tiresome and prying, but we have always been used to speak to each other—and what I wish to say is more on Miss Melville’s account than on yours.”

“ I am sorry I spoke crossly—but you know I don’t mean it—if you knew, Edith.... but, no matter. Will you say what you wish to say—I am ready to listen?”

“ I wished to speak to you, because it struck me that you, perhaps, do not see as plainly as I see what Miss Melville’s feelings are.”

Colonel Maxwell started up in his chair. “ And what are her feelings?” he asked, eagerly.

“ I don’t *know*;—of course, how should I know?—but I fancy that I see—indeed I feel sure that I am not mistaken—that she loves you, George, and I wished to ask you, if you did not mean to marry her?”

“ Marry her!” he said, and he passed his hand over his eyes, while a look of indescribable anguish overspread his countenance.

Though he had acknowledged, though he had been forced this day to acknowledge to himself that he loved, that he worshipped her, this word he had not dared to say.

“ My dear George,” said Edith, moving her chair to his side, “ what have I said to annoy you? — I never doubted till this morning that you meant to marry her — and I have been learning to look at her quite as a sister, a beautiful sister,” she said, with a smile.

He drew a deep breath, but still was silent.

“ When you spoke this morning of going to England,” continued she, “ I thought perhaps you had not thought of all that you have done—that you did not see that Miss Melville loves you.”

“ Do you say she loves me, Edith; are you sure of it?”

“ As sure as I can be by observation—and not a common love—not a fancy, George. I don’t think she knows it yet herself; but, if you speak of going, see then if I am not right.”

“ And if I not only speak of going, Edith, but do go actually, and never see her again—what then ?” As he spoke, again he covered his eyes with his hand.

“ You know, George, I am not very romantic. I have seen too much of passing fancies, and the power of a very short time in healing wounds, to believe that broken hearts are common things—so you may trust me—and I should say that Miss Melville has no common character, no common depth of feeling—and that she loves you with no common love. In her case, a broken heart would not surprise me, uncommon as it is. Why, George,” she continued, earnestly, “ you cannot be serious in talking of leaving her. I could not believe it of you.”

He jumped up, and threw open the window again. Then, hastily returning, he took his sister’s hand and put it on his throbbing temples. She looked alarmed, and moved towards the bell.

“ No, no, Edith,” he said, catching her hand again, “ I am not ill. If you should ever

abhor me, Edith," he continued, in a voice husky with agitation, "remember to-night!" and, hastily kissing her, he rushed out of the room.

CHAPTER XIV.

No charmed lot is thine, my child,
But with thy web of life
A silver thread is twined, to shine
Mid days of storm and strife.

Anon.

It was Christmas Eve at Wilmington. Mr. Harcourt and Juliet had returned that day, and several other old friends of Mr. Villars had come to spend a few days with him.

Mr. Villars was talking at one end of the drawing-room ; it was about ten o'clock. Close to the fire sat Evelyn with her work-frame, and Mr. Harcourt by her side.

Evelyn had kept pretty well to her resolution of not speaking of Colonel Maxwell ; indeed, she had not lately had the power to speak of him with much satisfaction ; but now,

when Mr. Harcourt asked her so kindly if she was happy, she found herself telling him that she was happy, but that she wished she could have heard something from Rome.

“I suppose Miss Maxwell does not get well so fast as I thought she would. I suppose I must wait, but sometimes I think that I am very nearly tired. I suppose you would say, Mr. Harcourt, that waiting is one of the things I have got to learn how to bear.”

“Perhaps I should, dear Evelyn,” he replied, smiling kindly; “but even I think that you have waited long enough, and have borne it very well.”

“You must not praise me too much,” she said, shaking her head; “I am in a good temper to-night, because I am so glad to see you and Juliet again; but sometimes I do scold a little. It has been very dull lately,” she said, with a sigh, “since I began to get impatient, that is, for about a month or three weeks. Do you know that, one night, I could not help telling Miss Drake; and she was so good-natured, and so pleased, and surprised,

that I was glad I did ; but then afterwards I was sorry, and I was obliged to give up speaking, because, if I said I was impatient, she always said, ‘No wonder, my dear;’ and sometimes said such disagreeable things !—you cannot think what shocking things she said !”

They were interrupted and startled by a loud ring of the bell at the house-door. Evelyn’s cheek flushed, and she looked up at Mr. Harcourt with a bright, radiant smile. He returned it kindly, and Mr. Villars moved towards her, and gave her an affectionate nod. No one moved — no one spoke; Evelyn worked away with an agitated hand.

The door opened, and Henry Egerton was announced. He was received with looks blank with disappointment, but Evelyn was the first to recover herself; and, throwing down her work to go towards him, she said,

“ So you are come, Henry, after all; we are so glad ! but you surprised us a little.”

Henry shook hands with her with more than usual kindness, but he looked grave and thoughtful.

When he had accounted a little for his appearance and the lateness of the hour, he sat down by Mr. Harcourt, and begged Evelyn to make him some tea. She brought it to him, and then, sitting down again to her work, she began to talk ; but he answered at random, and then apologized, saying he was tired.

“ I wish you would go and play, Evelyn,” he said, at last.

“ Do you really mean it, Henry ? because it is so long since I have seen you, and I had so very much rather talk.”

“ Yes, I do wish it ; nobody has played one note to me since I was here in October ; and I really am too tired to talk ; so do go and play, there’s a good girl !”

She went to the pianoforte, but, after playing a few bars, looked round and saw Henry, apparently quite roused, talking very earnestly to Mr. Harcourt.

“ Really, Henry,” she said, getting up, “ this is too bad ; you are not listening to a note !”

He laughed, went to the pianoforte, asked for two or three things, and then, in the middle of one he called his favourite, walked back again to Mr. Harcourt.

“I heard such a strange report to-day,” he said, in a low voice; “that is what I am come down about. I suppose you know about Evelyn and Maxwell.”

Mr. Harcourt nodded.

“I thought so. Mr. Villars told me just before I went away. Well, I heard to-day the strangest story;—it is more than a report, for Campbell is just come from Rome, and he told me of it quite naturally.”

“What have you heard?—what is the matter?” said Mr. Harcourt, anxiously.

“Why, Campbell tells me that Maxwell is going to be married to—to—” he hesitated, and turned away his head for a moment, “to Clarice Melville—in fact, that they are married. It was to be last Monday, the 20th, I think. There is no doubt about it, I am afraid. What is to be done?”

Evelyn approached again. “Really, Henry,”

she said, rather pettishly, "I cannot bear this ; I never did like whispering and mysteries ;" and she sat down with a very determined look to her work.

Henry nodded up his head in his old manner.

"Well, I don't care, Henry ; I will ask anybody if it is not disagreeable to be sent off in that sort of way. I should like to know what you would say if Mr. Harcourt and I began to whisper, instead of talking to you."

"Evelyn is right," said Mr. Harcourt, kindly ; "it is disagreeable to have mysteries. Henry wanted to ask my advice," he continued, looking at her rather gravely ; "and I know you would not have minded if he had told you so ; but we will leave it till another time."

"Oh ! no, I will go now," she said, her petulance vanishing at the least word of kindness. As she got up, she bent her head over her work for a moment, and said to Mr. Harcourt, with a smile, though the tears stood

in her eyes, “I was a little disappointed, and I am afraid that has made me cross.”

She did not wait for an answer, but hurried to the pianoforte, and began to play.

Henry sat down again by Mr. Harcourt; but the latter stopped him. “Do go to her, Henry—don’t worry her more than is necessary. You can come to my room after she is gone to bed;” and he sat down in deep thought, while Henry followed his cousin.

Henry’s story, when calmly and quietly told to Mr. Harcourt after Evelyn was gone to bed, appeared to be too correct and circumstantial to leave any doubt of its truth; and, after a long conference, the latter undertook to break the news to Mr. Villars without further delay, as it was possible that otherwise the information might reach Evelyn’s ears in some sudden way. For this purpose, Mr. Harcourt went at once to Mr. Villars’s room.

The indignation, the passion, of the father was violent—too violent, perhaps, to be lasting. He stamped with his foot till the very

walls seemed to shake—he clenched his fist—every epithet of abuse, every threat of vengeance that rises so easily to the lips of an enraged man, burst from his mouth, and were lavishly bestowed on Colonel Maxwell. That he should dare so to insult *him*—that he should dare so to behave to Evelyn—that he could have the heart to bring a cloud on her bright spirit—Evelyn, his bright Evelyn ! And Mr. Harcourt stood by, outwardly calm, but feeling within a scorn, a bitterness, an indignation, which all Mr. Villars's violence but feebly expressed.

At last, the storm of the father's passion was exhausted; and he came and stood before Mr. Harcourt, and asked him what he advised him to do.

“To do nothing,” was Mr. Harcourt's answer. “In honour, he is engaged to Evelyn, but scarcely in word; and, if even he were so, in such cases it always appears to me that the steps that are taken to repair an evil which cannot be repaired lower all parties and do good to none. If Colonel Maxwell

rejects the priceless treasure which you were willing to have given him, the loss is his—leave him to his own conscience. For Evelyn, my hope would be that her life's happiness cannot be engaged ; and that her sunny, elastic spirit will bear her through this trouble. One of a woman's severest trials, the wound to her pride, I trust she need feel but little ; for so few know of her engagement. Will you break it to her, or," he asked, with an anxious desire that his offer should be accepted, " will you entrust it to me ? I will do it as gently as I can."

" Oh ! you must do it, Harcourt—I could no more bear to see her tears....Villain !" he said, gnashing his teeth.

" I will do it then to-morrow," replied Mr. Harcourt ; and he left the room.

CHAPTER XV.

Oh! nostra vita, ch'e si bella in vista,
Com' perde agevolmente in un matino
Quel che in molt' anni a gran pena s'acquista.

PETRARCA.

Evelyn came down to breakfast the following morning in spirits unusual even for her—for, to her still fresh and simple mind, the distribution of her Christmas presents was an excitement and a pleasure.

“ I wish you a merry Christmas, papa,” she said, as she kissed her father, “ and I hope you will like this little thing—but I wish it was nicer.”

“ It is very nice, my dear child,” said her father, in an unusual tone of affection ; “ and whatever it was, I should like it, because you give it to me.”

Evelyn’s eyes sparkled, for Mr. Villars was not in the habit of making such speeches.

She went round with her presents and good wishes; then, as she sat down for the first time, remarked something unusual in the appearance of the party.

“Is anything the matter, Henry?” she said, in a low voice, to her cousin. “Everybody looks grave, I think, except Miss Drake. Papa gave her a new gown, this morning, and that will make her smile for a week; but everybody else.....How very grave papa looks! Is there anything the matter, Henry?”

“I am only just come down, Evelyn. Mr. Villars has only said, ‘What a cold morning,’ since I came into the room.”

“Is anything the matter, Mr. Harcourt?” she said, turning to the other side.

“Don’t be fanciful, dear Evelyn,” he replied; “that is a bad habit to get into.”

“But you look grave, too. Perhaps, however, it is only my fancy, and because I feel so very happy myself, this morning. Dickens has been making me laugh so much with her advice—she says I am growing old, now; and she says,” she added, with a little blush, “that

perhaps I shall be married before next Christmas; and so, that I ought to hold myself better, and try not to laugh quite so much. Do *you* think I laugh too much?" she added again, raising her bright face to Mr. Harcourt's.

"No," he said, hastily; then more gravely continued, "I suppose Dickens means that you have reached the time when life, and perhaps the trials of life, begin, and that you ought to prepare a little to bear them."

"Oh, not trials! don't talk of that; at least, not to-day. I believe it is the cold makes everybody look odd; your fingers are quite dead, Henry."

"No wonder," he said, shivering; "that Peggy of yours, or whatever her name may be, has a particular spite against me. She always would give me hot water when I was down here before; and now I really believe she stands my tub in the cellar, or the ice-house, before she puts it in my room."

Evelyn's fancy of something being the

matter lasted through the day. It was, indeed, impossible for those who loved her to watch without sadness the lightness of her step, or to listen to the sounds of her gay laugh, when they thought of the trial that was hanging over her; but the day was intensely cold, and she satisfied herself, "that the cold weather had an unpleasant effect on some people's temper."

Mr. Harcourt had begged to be allowed to put off the disclosure till the evening. He could not bear to spoil the brightness of the day; and he hoped that rest and sleep might follow quickly on her sorrow, and soften, perhaps, its first bitterness.

At about ten o'clock, Mr. Villars, as had been arranged, begged Evelyn to go to the library, and fetch him some book which he named. She flew off, with a candle; and, with a heavy heart, Mr. Harcourt, after a moment, followed her.

As he passed sadly down the passage, listening to the light fall of her footstep, the second verse of those beautiful lines of

Moore's, which have been before quoted, as applicable to Evelyn, came to his mind.

For time will come, with all its blights—
The ruined hope—the friend unkind ;
And Love, who leaves where'er he lights
A chilled or burning heart behind.
While youth, that now like snow appears,
Ere sullied by the darkening rain,
When once 'tis touched by sorrow's tears,
Will never shine so bright again.

It was in this view that Evelyn's present trial most deeply affected him. It was not sorrow that he dreaded for her ; he knew too well that the waters of sorrow are waters of healing and purifying, as well as of bitterness ; but he dreaded for her this sudden knowledge of the hardness, the falsehood, of the world. He sighed over the wreck of that bright innocence, that unconsciousness of evil, which had been her greatest charm.

He followed her into the library. She called to him, laughingly, as he stood undecided in the doorway.

“ Oh, Mr. Harcourt, is that you ? I am so glad you are come ; for these books are so very

dirty—I am afraid I shall spoil this pretty gown, which papa gave me to wear to-day—something new for luck, you know. Perhaps it would not hurt your coat; so, would you be so very kind as to lift this large book for me."

Mr. Harcourt approached, but did not smile, as usual; he took down the book, and laid it on the table.

"Now, I am afraid I must ask you to carry it, it is so very dusty; or, perhaps, I had better get a duster," and she was flying away.

"Stay, Evelyn," said Mr. Harcourt, very gravely; "I wish to speak to you."

She stopped, and looked up with an expression of surprise; then, still more struck with the gravity of his countenance, she said hastily, and with a blush, "Are you going to scold me? Have I done anything wrong? I am very sorry if I have."

"No, indeed; nothing wrong," he said, gently. "I came to you from Mr. Villars—I have something to say to you."

"Oh dear, Mr. Harcourt, if you did but

know how I hate suspense and waiting—I never could bear it. Will you tell me what papa wants, and not try to frighten me in this way."

"But I wish to frighten you, dear Evelyn. I have something, indeed, to tell you; some bad news," he said, fixing his eyes gravely and sadly upon her, for he wished to draw her to some suspicion, at least, of the evil, rather than suddenly to startle her with it. But it is hard for the young and bright even to imagine sorrow and disappointment.

"Bad news," she repeated, looking up rather inquiringly; "what bad news can I hear? unless..." she suddenly added, with a little startled but scarcely alarmed blush, "unless..." and she stopped.

"Yes, Evelyn," said Mr. Harcourt, slowly and sadly; "you are right; it is of *him* I would speak."

The blush deepened to crimson, and she put out her hand, as if to seize him. "Oh, Mr. Harcourt! not....not...."

"No, dear Evelyn," he said, perceiving the

only fear and dread that crossed her mind ; “ he is well—well in health.”

She smiled a bright smile of relief—relieved of that apprehension, what other fear could cross her innocent mind ? Mr. Harcourt shrank from the task before him.

“ I see that you cannot suspect evil,” he began again ; “ how should you ? but you must, dear Evelyn. It is my painful task to teach you that the world has trials ; that *he* is unworthy....” he paused, lest even now she had not caught his meaning. But something of fear had entered her mind at last ; her cheek was crimson again, and her eye was fixed on his.

Mr. Harcourt took her hand ; now he felt he might tell her all. “ Yes, he is unworthy ; you must forget him ; dear, dear Evelyn, he is engaged to another !”

She withdrew her hand, and clasped her fingers together, while every tint of colour forsook that cheek which, even in illness, still looked bright ; but she said not a word, and, her eyes wildly fixed waited for more.

Mr. Harcourt spoke quickly, but calmly. He thought it best at once to tell the whole. “Henry Egerton heard the news, and hurried down, lest you should hear it suddenly. He is engaged—perhaps married, to another—to Clarice Melville. This is all we know; and now you know all. Evelyn, dearest Evelyn, speak to me; for worlds I would not give you pain, and yet I have been forced to do this. Speak to me; tell me that you will try to bear this...” He looked fondly, affectionately in her face, but she neither wept nor spoke; one deep breath she drew, then hurried from the room without a word.

Slowly Mr. Harcourt returned to the drawing-room, to relieve her father’s anxiety; but he had scarcely told Mr. Villars that the painful duty was done, when Evelyn herself appeared.

Her cheek was flushed again, but calmly and steadily she sate down to her work, remained at it for a few minutes, then as quietly got up and put it away, kissed her father, wished good night to every body, and left the room.

Mr. Villars, relieved of all his apprehensions, sighed a sigh of relief; and, after a few words with Mr. Harcourt, returned to his usual business conversations or calculations. But Mr. Harcourt looked deeper; and he saw, with pain, that it was pride, pride only, which gave this calmness and self-command to the usually childlike and excitable girl; and his fears for the effect of this trial upon her character returned with redoubled force.

Fearful, also, for Evelyn's health, and anxious that some watch should be kept upon her, he sate down by Miss Drake, and shortly told her the state of the case.

Miss Drake was shocked, grieved, and, for a moment, but only a moment, surprised. She put down her embroidery, and put up her eyes.

“I am not surprised, sir; such things never surprise me. The affair has been most improperly conducted all along. No communication to Mr. Villars, nor even to me. A ring given privately to Miss Villars—and then this long silence. I have once or twice thought

it my duty to prepare Miss Villars for behaviour even such as this."

"It was rather hasty and sudden, Miss Drake, I allow; but it was so from circumstances over which Mr. Villars had no control. I cannot see that he has anything to reproach himself with."

"I don't know, sir. It appeared to me, that the acquaintance was too hastily made; but, at least, I have nothing to reproach myself with; for you may remember that, the very day of that unfortunate visit to Redlynch, I warned Mr. Villars that we knew nothing of Colonel Maxwell's principles; but I was not attended to; and this is the consequence."

"Well, Miss Drake, you may be right," said Mr. Harcourt; "but you will not say this to Evelyn; it will be better for the present, at least, to leave the past without reproach or remark, for it cannot be altered."

"No, sir," replied Miss Drake, with more tact than he had given her credit for. "I shall, of course, avoid the subject altogether, unless Miss Villars may wish to speak to me;

but the night is so cold, that I may easily recommend her to take something warm, which, perhaps, may do her good."

Mr. Harcourt smiled at Miss Drake's remedy for a disappointed affection ; but he knew too well the connection of body and mind, especially in the very young, to contradict the idea that it might do her good.

But Evelyn was unapproachable to the consolations either of the body or the mind. When Miss Drake went up stairs, she met Mrs. Dickens coming from Evelyn's room in great wrath. "She supposed Mr. Villars knew his own mind ; but she must say, it was past her understanding ; there was Miss Evelyn as white as a ghost, and shaking like one in an ague fit, and no Mr. Peters sent for ; and what was the use of doctors ? she didn't see, she didn't, nor fathers either, for the matter of that."

Miss Drake, rather alarmed at Mrs. Dickens's account, went into Evelyn's room, and anxiously inquired how she was, not forgetting the recommendation of something warm ; but

she merely wished her governess good night, and resolutely closed her eyes. When Dickens, however, again approached, with a proposal to send for Mr. Peters, she raised her head, and, with a petulance very uncommon in her manner to her old nurse, said, that if Mr. Peters was fetched, even out of bed, nothing should induce her to see him.

The next morning she went down to breakfast as usual; and, to careless observers, she might still have been the bright Evelyn who had gladdened their sight before. Even Mr. Villars nodded and smiled at her, as he heard her laughingly apologize for a mistake she had made in the tea or coffee of one of his guests; and, glad to be relieved from the painful oppression which had for a day saddened his mind, he soliloquized much in the words of Mr. Bennet, in "*Pride and Prejudice*." "Every girl, I suppose, is crossed in love at some time, and this is a good job over. Perhaps, after all, Colonel Maxwell did not mean so much as we thought. There's the ring, though, against him. Well, it can't be

helped. Evelyn will get over it—that's clear."

But Mr. Harcourt and Henry Egerton (whose perception was in some degree sharpened by a fellow-feeling in the business,) were not deceived by her smiles or her words; they saw the shame which one moment flushed her cheek and cast down her eyes, and the pride which the next instant prompted her to look round with such careless unconcern. They saw, regretted, and pitied; but compassion and sympathy Evelyn gave them no opportunity to express. If they found her at all during the day, it was working at Miss Drake's side; she seemed to avoid with care every attempt at conversation.

In the evening, however, Henry surprised her alone. She had been talking for some time to one of her father's guests, and suddenly got up and left the room. Anxious to express his sympathy, and determined, however great her unwillingness to hear him might be, at some time to do it, he also got up, and followed her. He found her in a

small room which opened into the drawing-room, standing near the fire, and leaning against the chimney-piece. She started as he approached, and, with her face averted, hurriedly began to poke the fire; but he fancied that, in her momentary glance, he saw the traces of tears on her cheeks.

“Evelyn,” he said, kindly, “I am very sorry for this. I would rather my hand had been cut off, than that it should have happened.”

“Thank you; thank you,” she said, hurriedly, “but don’t talk about it—it does not matter.”

“Not matter!” said Henry, vehemently; “not matter that a man should behave like a scoundrel, and that you should be unhappy! Not matter!—I say, Evelyn, I suppose you would not wish me to fight him—but if you would....”

“Fight, Henry!” said Evelyn, scornfully.

“Yes, fight; it would give me the most unmixed satisfaction to blow his brains out.”

“How foolishly you talk, Henry! what is there to fight about? Colonel Maxwell,” she

added, proudly and bitterly, “is at liberty to do as he pleases.”

“Is he at liberty?” replied Henry; and he touched the ring, which, perhaps, in some lingering distrust she had allowed to remain on her finger.

With a glowing cheek, she turned from him; then, as she saw that he was anxious to say more, she hastily returned to the drawing-room, and placed herself again at Miss Drake’s side.

CHAPTER XVI.

The freshness of my soul, the clear, high trust
In truth and nobleness, on earth is gone.

It was no desire to express his sympathy—no feeling connected, however rightly or kindly with himself—that made Mr. Harcourt anxiously watch for an opportunity to induce Evelyn to talk to him. He wished to show her how needless it was to bear herself so proudly to those who knew her and loved her so well. He wished to convince her that there was no humiliation in her trial; that humiliation is rather for him who forsakes, than her who is forsaken—a vain labour—for none in her circumstances ever have been, or probably ever will be, convinced of this truth.

The following day was Sunday; and, as

they walked all together to church, and the sound of Evelyn's usually musical laugh, now loud and forced, grated upon his ear, Mr. Harcourt's anxiety on her account redoubled. But she shrank with a sensitiveness and reserve, which he had not expected in her open nature, from any mention of her griefs ; and it seemed especially his kindness which she dreaded. She resolutely walked by her father's side, to and from church, and, declining to go again in the afternoon, for the rest of the day was not to be found.

Towards evening, her conscience smote her for her unkindness to Juliet ; and, thinking that *her* presence would be a protection from Mr. Harcourt's remarks, she ventured to the little girl's room.

Mr. Harcourt was reading to his daughter some verses from the "Christian Year," but, as Evelyn entered, he looked up with a smile of pleasure, and laid down the book.

"Pray go on reading, Mr. Harcourt," she said. "I only came to see Juliet, and I had much rather hear you read than talk, for I

have got nothing to say." And she seated herself on a chair at the bottom of Juliet's sofa, at a distance from the candle.

Mr. Harcourt took up the book, and, turning over the pages, he read the poem belonging to the Wednesday before Easter.

"Do you like the verses, Evelyn?" he said, as he finished.

"Yes," she replied, but it was languidly and with indifference; and, a moment afterwards, getting up with a shiver, she moved to the fire.

"How cold it is," she said; "and that wind, how it does howl! I never heard it like that before. Does it not make you melancholy, Juliet?"

"Yes, it does, rather," said the little girl; "it always sounds as if all the world was sighing. But I don't think I dislike it."

"Ah! I believe you like melancholy things. I hate them," and she drew nearer to the fire; "but pray go on reading, Mr. Harcourt; I did not mean to stop you."

"But we had rather talk, Evelyn, if you

will talk to us. Juliet has been reading all day."

"Poor Juliet! has she really! I am very sorry that I did not come to see her before. I am sure, *I* have not liked the day;" and, in spite of her efforts, tears rolled down her cheeks.

Mr. Harcourt got up, and left the room. He could not bear to see her unhappy, and yet make no attempt to comfort her.

When the dressing-bell rang, about a quarter of an hour afterwards, he came hastily back, in the hope of meeting her alone. He found her just outside Juliet's door.

"Dear Evelyn," he said, stopping her, "why do you avoid us in this way? Is it not unkind towards those who you know love you, and wish for your happiness above all things? You cannot deceive us," he continued, earnestly; "we know that you are wretched; why will you not let us comfort you?"

"I don't want to be comforted," she said impatiently, and moved away; but, in a

moment, she was back again. “Am I very cross, Mr. Harcourt? I don’t mean to be so. I am sure, I don’t know what makes me so. I shall have to talk to you some time, when—when.....Will you wait till then?” and she flew away to avoid the possibility of more.

If Evelyn was waiting for some further confirmation of the intelligence, she was not long kept in suspense.

After breakfast, the next day, Henry Egerton called to Mr. Harcourt to follow him.

“You must think about showing this to Evelyn,” he said, giving him a letter; “it is a few words from Campbell, and it makes it quite certain, I am afraid. You had better do it—that is, if you think it right she should see it. There is the place at the third page.”

Mr. Harcourt took the letter, and read the following words.

“As you appeared to be much interested about Miss Melville’s marriage, I must tell

you that I heard yesterday from D—, who is still at Rome, and he says that Colonel Maxwell is such an ardent lover, that the marriage has been hastened at his request, and was to take place on the 16th or 17th. He says it is a most romantic affair altogether—no talk of settlements, or any such terrestrial matters. The lovers, however,” he adds, “are very sedate. Miss Melville is always like a statue (though happiness or excitement has brought a very beautiful colour to her cheeks), and Maxwell is graver than any thing I ever saw; but he is always in extremes, and I suppose love is his present passion, and engrosses him entirely.”

Mr. Harcourt shook his head. “Poor Evelyn! must she see this? I suppose, if she insists, it is as well; anything is better than suspense. I will tell her you have heard; and then, if she is not satisfied, she must see it. I will go to her at once.”

Evelyn was in the drawing-room with Miss Drake. She stood at the window, listlessly watching the snow as it fell and gradually

covered the garden, making the world without as cheerless as the world of her own heart. Mr. Harcourt made a sign to Miss Drake to leave them ; then, as he saw Evelyn's startled glance, when her governess closed the door, he went to her.

“ Forgive me, Evelyn — but I wished to speak to you alone. Henry has heard again.”

She became very pale, and fixed her eyes on his face.

“ It is not much, but I am afraid it can leave no doubt. The marriage had been hastened, and was to take place on the 16th or 17th.”

“ Where is the letter ?” said Evelyn, eagerly.
“ Can I see it ?”

“ Why should you, dear Evelyn ?—there is very little in it ; and it is written in a style that may give you pain.”

“ But I had rather, indeed—I had much rather,” she said, anxiously ; “ pray, let me see it.”

Mr. Harcourt put the letter into her hands, and went to another part of the room.

After a few minutes, she walked steadily to the table, sat down to write and seal a letter, then, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, took it to Mr. Harcourt.

“ Will you undertake this ? ” she said, “ and have it sent to him directly ? While there was a doubt, I would not, could not believe it ; but now—I would not,” she continued, proudly, “ that he should think I would keep, for one moment, a remembrance of him ; and now it is all forgotten.”

“ I will undertake it,” he said, gravely ; “ but, Evelyn, is this the way to bear such a trial ? —I would not, for your own sake, have you so proud.”

She made no answer.

“ Did you not love him once, Evelyn, and is it not possible that you should have some feeling stronger than pride now that you have lost him ? ”

“ Oh ! Mr. Harcourt ! ” she said, turning from him, “ you are very cruel.”

“ Am I cruel, dear Evelyn ? I don’t mean to be so ; but it grieves me to see you thus.

Why will you attempt to deceive yourself and us by this apparent indifference? Would it not be natural, would it not be right, that you should regret him whom you once loved? though you must try to love him no more. There is no humiliation in feeling this, dear Evelyn," he continued, earnestly, as he saw that she trembled at his words. " The humiliation is not for you, who have been true, and would have been true to him all your life long; but for him who has behaved so falsely, so heartlessly to you!"

"Oh! Mr. Harcourt, how could he do it?" she exclaimed; and, sitting down, she covered her face with her hands.

"There are stronger temptations in the world, dear Evelyn, than you know, or, I hope, ever will know. Miss Melville, I have heard from many people, is strangely attractive, and circumstances may have thrown them together. This is all I can say: there can be little to excuse; but, Evelyn, I am sure you may pity him, for he cannot be happy—it is impossible."

"Pity!" said Evelyn, raising her head and

ashing away the large tears which hung about her eyes ; “ why should I pity ?—I *scorn* him !” she added, with a bitterness of which he had scarcely believed her capable.

It is not among the young, and thoughtless, and innocent, who are unconscious of the hidden weakness of their own hearts that pity for error and for sin is found ; to them, guilt is less sinful than unnatural ; the impulse of their conscience is to shrink from it. The scorn that Evelyn felt for Colonel Maxwell’s falsehood was greater even than the humiliation of being forsaken.

“ You think me wrong to speak so,” she continued ; “ but it can’t be helped, and now let it all be forgotten :” and she moved away.

Mr. Harcourt watched her sadly, but without attempting to detain her. When she had reached the door, however, with one of her usual quick movements, she came back again.

“ You have been very kind to me,” she said. “ Everybody has been very kind, and you must not think me ungrateful : but pray don’t be kind any more—I had rather not ; it

only makes me"—she added in a faltering voice, and as if involuntarily—"more miserable." Then, to do away with the effect of her words, "We must forget all about it now," she said, with a forced smile, "and begin to be happy again....but oh, Mr. Harcourt, how the world is changed in a few days—who could believe it was so wicked?"

That Evelyn's was not a case of a broken heart must be very evident. They are not common things; and, though pride may often bear a part in that excess of sorrow which is called a broken heart, scorn and resentment does not—when scorn begins, love can be but short-lived. But not the less did Colonel Maxwell's desertion leave serious effects upon her character. Not only was her brightness and joyousness blighted, but the blight fell also on the frank and fearless confidence of her nature, that unsuspecting trust in the love, the kindness, the goodness of the world, which has so large a share in the happiness and the innocence of the heart. Her character and tone of thought were deepened, perhaps, but

scarcely profited. The sweetness of her temper, too, was clouded ; the constant oppression of concealed sorrow, (for she fought against it with a steadiness and resolution which could hardly have been expected) and the humiliating remembrance of having been forsaken, gave an irritation and petulance to her manner and temper of which she was conscious, which worried and fretted herself, but from which she felt unable to free herself. It requires a large share of virtue to profit by the trial that comes in the shape of man's or woman's falsehood—and Evelyn profited not.

PART THE THIRD.

CHAPTER XVII.

It is not safe to place the mind and heart
On brink of evil—nor its flames to see,
Lest they should dizzy, or some taint impart,
Or to our sins a fascination be.

Lyra Apostolica.

Colonel Maxwell, as it has been seen, fell deeper into the snare which he had laid for himself.

That to look on evil, to argue with temptation, not only accustoms our minds to the contemplation, but actually lessens the appearance of evil in our eyes, is a truth which few will doubt. Conscience rebukes fiercely at first; but, if its warnings are unheeded, it relapses into silence, not for ever, but till the fruit of the temptation has been reaped—the heart, possessed only with one thought and

passion, no longer warned, is suffered to go on blindly, till the meditated evil is consummated.

When first the thought of being false to Evelyn presented itself, Colonel Maxwell turned from it in horror; but he invited it to present itself again, by seeking Clarice Melville's society, with even more *empressement* than before, instead of flying from the strange magic with which she attracted him. And it did present itself again—and once again. Then came the trial of Clarice's affection. He spoke of going with a troubled voice, and his eyes sought to pierce the secrets of her soul; and he saw the slow blush rise in her cheek, and die away and leave it paler than before; and he heard her usually quiet voice tremble, and there came a shade of melancholy and embarrassment over her gentle calm manner; and he felt that she loved him—loved him more than Evelyn had the power to do; and he dwelt upon the remembrance of his sister's words, that hers might be the case of a broken heart.

The struggle was long and severe, but none who had seen him could have doubted what the issue would be: he blinded his eyes, he argued with himself, he thought of the scene with Evelyn on that last morning of his visit to Wilmington, till, contrasted with his present feelings and the words he longed to pour out to Clarice, it faded into insignificance, and his words to words without meaning. The struggle was long, but his will, his passion conquered at last—the voice of conscience was stilled.

He told his love, and Clarice was his own—and for a few days he gave himself up to the intense enjoyment of his happiness. Then, dreading that the warnings of conscience would rise again, he implored that the marriage might be immediate—and everything yielded to his will. Mr. Melville, finding that all the proposals he made were agreed to with careless indifference, consented to allow the marriage to take place without the usual legal settlements.

But Colonel Maxwell was not destined to

be long at rest. He was scarcely made happy on this point, before a new anxiety, a fear, a dread, took possession of his soul: and this was on the subject of Clarice's health. He could not say that he had any cause for alarm. When he argued with himself, he laughed at his fears; but, as he watched her fragile appearance and the languor of her step as they walked together—as he saw the transparent fairness of her complexion—and, still more, as the unearthly purity and beauty of her mind unfolded itself, the thought was continually recurring that she could not be destined for a life on earth: and when, a few days before their marriage, Mrs. Melville called him, to talk to him, as she said, about Clarice's health, the words rung like a death-knell upon his heart.

“Clarice tells me that you do not intend to return immediately to England,” she began.

“No,” he said, hesitatingly: “I should have thought that a winter in England might be too trying to Miss Melville.”

“ I believe you are right, and that it will be better to defer it to the Spring—coming too suddenly, it might do more harm than good : but I was anxious to tell you that, so far from dreading the air of England for my daughter, I believe it will be of great use to her.”

“ Is not Miss Melville well ?” he asked anxiously.

“ Yes, I think she is peculiarly well just now—but Clarice is not strong, Colonel Maxwell. A few months ago, I felt rather uneasy about her, and consulted a very eminent physician, and he said there was no immediate cause for alarm ; but he recommended a cooler climate, and mentioned England especially as likely to be of use to her, from the strong desire she expressed to return there. Unfortunately, it is not convenient to Mr. Melville to return to England ; now, however, we need not regret it—you will doubtless carry her there.”

“ What is it you fear for Miss Melville ?” he asked, in the same anxious manner.

“Oh, I do not fear anything. Pray do not think that I wish to alarm you—I am sure Clarice will do well ; but I must give up my charge to you. Excitement is not good for her—she generally suffers from it afterwards—and is likely to feel the unusual excitement of this time. She is in your hands now, Colonel Maxwell—you must take good care of her.”

He smiled, but so sadly, that even Mrs. Melville was struck by it.

“Pray don’t look so grave,” she continued. “I am really afraid that I have alarmed you ; but you must forgive my anxiety in parting from my Clarice for the first time. The air of England, and, still more, the air of Redlynch — so near her dear Cleveland—will, I have no doubt, remove all cause for anxiety.”

Redlynch !—was it there then that he was expected to take her ? He had not yet dared to contemplate, even to himself, a return to Evelyn’s neighbourhood : and a deeper cloud gathered on Colonel Maxwell’s brow—but it

was dispersed, as every thought and feeling of doubt and gloom was ever dispersed, by the appearance of his fair betrothed bride.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Fix thy full deep eyes on me,
Let me lose my being there,
Let me pass out into thee
From my house of sin and care.
Surely all thine inner soul,
Whence such lights for ever shine,
Must with mild and sweet control
Purify and brighten mine.

ALFORD.

We must pass over a few months.

It was about the middle of May, in the following year, that Colonel and Mrs. Maxwell landed in England.

If the most perfect, the most devoted love can give happiness, they should have been happy—and Clarice was happy. She loved her husband with no common love—it was worship, it was devotion: it might have been idolatry, if there had been one taint of selfish-

ness, one stain of earth in her nature, but Clarice was still as she had been. If happiness had had upon her the effect which she dreaded—if the new love that filled her heart had drawn down her thoughts to earth—it was unknown to her husband, undiscovered by any mortal eye except her own. To Colonel Maxwell she still was as a creature from another world—above the passions of earth—“above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,” she appeared to live “in regions mild of calm and serene air”—a calmness that seemed to rise from the pure and noble impulses of her own heart, and from the undeviating, almost unconscious performance of every duty as it presented itself. And on this calmness and purity her husband, who lived himself in the continual warfare of high desires and infirmity of purpose, reposed, as on a sure anchor, and was at rest—or rather would have been at rest, if it had not been for the continual recurrence of two painful thoughts, which struck like daggers upon his heart, even in his happiest moments.

His falsehood to Evelyn was naturally one of these: but it was no longer the thought of Evelyn that presented itself—a superior engrossing feeling had almost driven her image from his mind. There were moments indeed when the vision of her bright face, now perhaps turned into mournfulness, came sadly upon him—but this was not the haunting, oppressing thought—it was the dread that the knowledge of his falsehood should ever come to the ears of his angel wife, that he should ever see one shade of displeasure, one glance of scorn in her pure eyes, one cloud of dissatisfaction on her brow.

There had been a time when he had said that when once Clarice was his own, he would confess to her all; but, as he learnt more and more of the stainless purity of her mind, when he saw how she shrank from sin and falsehood—not sternly, not without pity, but with a kind of natural shrinking—he had banished the idea—he had felt that it was impossible. When, about three weeks after his marriage, he had received Evelyn's few simple words of

release, as she returned the ring, he had shuddered at the thoughts of his dishonourable conduct—he had shed over her letter passionate tears of agony and remorse; but even then he had checked himself: he had banished his emotion, he had stilled his conscience, lest one trace of unwonted agitation should attract the eyes of his wife.

And yet painful as was the constant concealment, the constant dread of discovery in which he lived, his heart was visited by a pang greater than this—terror for Clarice's health. It was still the same—there was no definite cause for alarm, but he could not avoid seeing that there was no strength in her: a little excitement, a little over-fatigue, and she sunk like a crushed flower, and her pale cheek became colourless, or, which alarmed him still more, flushed with a hectic tint. She appeared to be one of those whom one rough wind of life would overthrow. It was his fear for her which now brought him to England, and to Redlynch, in the hope that the more bracing air of her native land would give strength to

her fragile life. It was his intense anxiety on her account, which had given him resolution to consider calmly the prospect of meeting Evelyn again, which had made him resolve on humbling himself, if need be, to ask her forgiveness for the past, and secrecy for the future.

They landed at Southampton, and Mrs. Maxwell, fatigued with her journey, was laid up at the hotel; but, as if the influence of England was already felt, she rallied with unusual quickness, and in two or three days was allowed to set off for Redlynch, which was at a distance of only thirty miles.

On the evening before their departure, Clarice persuaded her husband that she was sufficiently recovered to walk with him.

Leaving the town, they wandered along the sea-shore, and as the fresh breeze blew upon her, Clarice seemed to revive, a glow like health came to her cheek, and a smile brighter than usual lit up her countenance.

Colonel Maxwell was walking by her side with a brow graver than it had been of late—

many painful thoughts were struggling for dominion within him—the fresh breeze of England brought no health or calmness to his mind.

“ I hope you will not wonder,” said the young wife, suddenly looking up in her husband’s face, “ if I say that I feel peculiarly happy to-night; you know that in one sense I must always be equally happy because I am with you—but I do feel pleasure in seeing England once again.”

“ I do not wonder, Clarice,” said Colonel Maxwell, smiling: “ I always knew that England was my rival.”

“ It is strange coming back to it—I never thought I should see it again—never even dreamed that I should come back as happily as I do now. It is all very strange,” she continued, in a musing tone, “ my life is so unlike what I had fancied it would be—I never thought of marrying, never wished it—and yet, George, now I cannot think how I ever lived without you.”

“ I think you never had any earthly wishes, Clarice,” said her husband.

She blushed, as she still did at words of praise from his lips—but she shrunk from it, and shook her head. “ It was not that,” she said. “ I often had dreams of a happiness greater than I felt myself, and thought how beautiful it must be ; but there were reasons why I rather dreaded than wished that it should come to me. At one time, I had a presentiment that I should die when I was young, and it was not then a painful thought, as it would be now ; I was rather happy to think so then, and the thought kept me from wishing for any change, or any tie that could bind me to the world.”

As she ceased speaking, she met her husband’s piercing, shuddering glance at her face ; and, reading at once how painfully her words had affected him, she continued quietly—“ I feel differently, now ; I feel as if I had many and happy years of life before me, and my only thought and fear for the future now is, that I may grow to love this world too well !” and her eyes were raised with a look of intense affection to his face.

But Colonel Maxwell's fears were excited and her expressions had not calmed him; the sea-breeze, as it blew upon the fragile form beside him, seemed to carry death, not health, in its freshness, and he drew her cloak more closely around her. "Let us go back, Clarice, the wind is too cold for you; if we do not enjoy England quietly at first, we shall be sent back to Italy."

They retraced their steps to the more frequented parts. It had been a hot sunny day, and many were out and enjoying the coolness of the evening.

"What a pretty girl!" said Clarice, suddenly, as she pointed to a young and a middle-aged lady, who were walking at some little distance. "Look, George!—is she not very pretty?—I suppose it cannot be—otherwise,—how like, how very like what I remember Evelyn Villars to have been!"

There was a pause before Colonel Maxwell replied: then he calmly said, "It is Miss Villars, Clarice."

Clarice disengaged her arm, and went hastily

forward—at the same moment Evelyn saw her and rushed towards her. There was no thought, no remembrance of Mrs. Maxwell; her early friend and companion alone were in her mind, as she eagerly exclaimed, “Oh! Clarice, are you really come?”

Then followed a few rapid questions, but then remembrance came, and her bright colour of joy faded, and she became suddenly silent.

“I must speak to Miss Drake,” said Clarice, smiling; “I must not let her think that I have forgotten her,” and she moved a few steps towards her.

At the same instant, with a hurried manner, Colonel Maxwell approached Evelyn. “They met without a word, without a sign of greeting,” but he bent towards her, and in a low, troubled voice said,

“Not for my sake, Miss Villars, but for Clarice—for Clarice Melville’s sake, I implore you to be silent;” and he turned again and stood at a little distance.

Evelyn trembled with agitation; but, though she was scarcely conscious of what his request

had been, its influence was felt; for, as Mrs. Maxwell returned, and began, with something of surprise,—“ I thought you knew Colonel Maxwell, Evelyn?” she replied with tolerable composure, “ Oh! yes, he has just spoken to me.”

“ Do you stay here long?” asked Clarice—“ we go home to Redlynch, to-morrow.”

“ About a week longer, I believe, and when we go back, I hope, Clarice, you will come to see me....” But again remembrance rose, and her voice faltered, and she paused.

“ I am sorry, Clarice,” said Colonel Maxwell, approaching again, “ but I must hurry you away. The wind is getting very cold.”

Clarice obeyed. Colonel Maxwell bowed gravely to Evelyn and to Miss Drake, and they parted again.

CHAPTER XIX.

Vous voyez mes chagrins, vous en aurez pitié—
Mon cœur n'attend plus rien que de votre amitié.
Hélas ! plein d'une erreur trop fatale et trop chère
Je vous sacrifiais au seul soin de lui plaire.

MARIAMNE.

And once committed, follows sin to sin,
As in a chain successive links are strung.

SCHILLER.

Though Evelyn had given way to no outward signs of grief, though her health was uninjured, and to indifferent observers her spirits were much what they had been, yet, in fact, she was changed. Her light-hearted gaiety, and the careless innocence which had led her to speak every word as it rose to her lips, were gone ; and Mr. Villars, though his perception was not very acute, could not but remark, that her step was slower ; that her song, as she sat and worked, or as she strolled

about the house, had ceased ; and that, although still her voice and laugh were frequently heard, there was not the thoughtless flow of other days. And he was pained at the change.

Anxious to give her some amusement, he had sent her, under the care of Miss Drake, and under the guardianship of Mr. Harcourt, who was taking Juliet to the seaside, to spend a month at Southampton, in the not unreasonable hope that change of scene would restore her to her former self—not an unreasonable hope ; for Mr. Villars looked upon the change as merely a momentary depression of spirits ; but, in fact, it was more. In the last few months, Evelyn had suddenly passed from the state of calmness and thoughtlessness, belonging to the days of childhood—and that state, when once left behind, cannot be recalled—that calm sleep of the soul can as little be restored again, as the days of infancy themselves.

Early in the morning of the day after the meeting I have described, Evelyn was sitting

alone in the drawing-room of the hotel where they were staying. A book was in her hand, but her eyes were wandering thoughtfully upon the beautiful sea view seen from the window. Her meditations were melancholy. They were not of Colonel Maxwell so much as of Clarice. “How lovely she was!—how like an angel, as she had always thought, only how much more beautiful than when she had last seen her! Who could look at her and not love her?—She was no longer surprised that Colonel Maxwell had forgotten her.” Half rising, and looking at herself in a glass, she continued, sadly—“Will it ever be possible that any one can care for me after they have seen that beautiful face?”—and she sighed deeply. Poor Evelyn! And yet it was but a fancied sorrow—for even at that moment there were many to whom her varying countenance and dark smiling eyes were fairer and dearer than Clarice’s perfect beauty. But the “fears of fancy are terrible,” and so are its sorrows, too.

She was still wrapt in her sad meditations,

though occasionally her eyes rested upon the book, when the waiter appeared with a tray and a card.

“A gentleman, ma’am, who is anxious to speak to you.”

For a moment the haughty blood rushed to Evelyn’s cheek, and she made no answer;—the waiter, misunderstanding the delay, and hearing several bells ring at the same moment, without waiting for orders, left the room, ushered in Colonel Maxwell, and hastily closed the door.

Recovering herself immediately, with a steady and simple dignity, Evelyn went towards him, and held out her hand.

He took it, but instantly dropped it again, and a silence followed. Evelyn sate down, and made a sign to him to sit down also, but he did not appear to notice it.

“I hope Clarice is well,” she said, in a trembling voice, attempting to break the painful silence.

He made no answer to the question, but came and stood before her. He had been endeavouring to conquer the agitation arising

from the new and humiliating position in which he stood, but his words still came hesitating and reluctant as he began.

“ I am not come, Miss Villars, to ask you to forgive me; it were a vain attempt, a vain endeavour, to seek to undo the past; selfishness, selfishness only and cowardice, brings me to you now.”

She looked up inquiringly, but did not speak.

“ I know,” he continued, with increasing agitation, “ that you must hate and despise me, that I have no right to come, that my very coming is an insult, and yet I am here—I am come to you, for all my happiness lies in your power!”

“ What do you wish me to do?” said Evelyn, in her sweet low voice. “ If it is what you said yesterday, you may be sure that I would not speak.”

“ I know,” he said at last, calmly, and with one deep sigh conquering his emotion, “ I know, Miss Villars, that you would do all that is kindest—but you cannot know all that hangs upon the request I make. You do not

know what Clarice is ; how I tremble before her purity—how I am a coward, who never knew what fear was till now—and I cannot have her know what I am ; my peace, my whole happiness is with you, and yet, what right have I to ask your silence ?”

“ I can have no wish to speak,” said Evelyn, gently ; but then her own bright honour and innocence prompting her, she went on earnestly for his welfare who had forsaken her ; “ but, surely, surely you are wrong, you are mistaken in this concealment. I think it is impossible you can be happy, if you conceal, if you attempt to . . . Oh ! surely you would be happier if you told Clarice everything.”

“ You do not know what you say, Miss Villars—I too thought so : I meant to tell her all, but it is impossible. It would break her heart to know my falsehood, my treachery....” He paused, for in that moment all the meanness of his conduct flashed like a new light upon his eyes—he continued, vehemently—“ all the meanness of which I have been guilty !”

“ But surely Clarice would forgive,” said Evelyn; “ it was all for her love: surely—surely she would forgive?”

“ Forgive, yes!” he said, sadly. “ Oh, yes! she would forgive—it is not that I fear; but how it would grieve her heart to see *me* thus—her husband!—how she would shrink from him, who, for the love of her, has come.....even to this!” And, hastily rising, he moved away in uncontrollable agitation.

Evelyn rose also. Every trace of pride and resentment vanished from her mind. “ I am sure, then, if it lies with me, you may be happy,” she said, gently and kindly, “ and I hope you will be happy.”

He made no answer, not even to thank her; he stood in the window, endeavouring to conquer the shame, the anguish, that was swelling in his proud heart, and thoughts of raising himself at least from this last degradation by confession to Clarice passed through his mind —only, however, to fade again with the first glance of her calm, pure, dark eyes. At length, however, he came towards Evelyn.

" I do not thank you, because I dare not ; and yet ".....he paused, hesitated, then bent forward, looked fondly and anxiously in her face, and took her hand. " I said I would not ask you to forgive me, and yet, Evelyn, I do ask it. I would hear from your lips that you have forgiven me, and that....." He paused again.

" Forgiven you !" said Evelyn, simply, speaking the feeling that had struck so painfully on her heart. " When I saw Clarice, I no longer wondered that you should forget me."

He dropped her hand, seized his hat, and hurried away. Those few words gave a deeper pang to his heart than any reproaches could have done.

CHAPTER XX.

In thy voice there thrills a tone,
Never to thy childhood known.

MRS. HEMANS.

“ Now, Evelyn, there is that Miss Law getting out! I do believe she lives with you.”

These words proceeded from Henry Egerton, who had come down unexpectedly to Wilmington a few days after Evelyn’s return from Southampton.

“ She must be coming to see you, then, Henry,” replied Evelyn, laughing; “ for she has not been here for three months, at least.”

“ *You* may talk, Evelyn,” said Henry, throwing himself into a chair. “ I shall not say a word.”

“ Well, Miss Villars, is Mr. Villars at

home?" said Bob Law, as he came in. "I have got something of great importance to say to him. I'm sure I don't know what is to happen, if we don't have some rain. The wheat looks so miserable, it makes me wretched to see it; and the cattle want rain, too. I know we shall have a disease breaking out."

"I am afraid papa is out," said Evelyn; "but I will send and see."

"I was talking to Colonel Maxwell about it yesterday. By the bye, Miss Villars, Lavinia and I drove over to Redlynch to see the new lady. I thought we should have gone to see you there, Miss Villars." In spite of herself, Evelyn blushed deeply, and Bob winked, to show that he saw it. "I did, Miss Villars; I very seldom am deceived, and I thought last year it was as clear a case as ever I had seen; and, I must say, I wish it had been so. I should have better liked to have seen you Mrs. Maxwell."

"I am sure," said Miss Law, "Colonel Maxwell need not have gone so far to choose a wife; he has not shown much taste, though

he has brought her all the way from Italy. I never was so disappointed in any one."

"Not disappointed in her beauty, I presume," said Henry, unable to contain his indignation.

"As to beauty, I never cared much for what is commonly called beauty. Mrs. Maxwell is handsome, I don't deny that; but I see nothing to admire. Bob calls her a polished stone."

Miss Law's feelings towards Mrs. Maxwell were none of the sweetest; for, as she had long looked on Evelyn as the sole obstacle to her establishment at Wilmington, she felt as if Clarice had robbed her of the bright hope which Colonel Maxwell's attentions to Evelyn had excited.

"No, Lavinia, I did not say that; you see, Miss Villars, the case was this: there was Mrs. Maxwell on the terrace, and there were a good many others there; there was Denham and his wife, an uncommonly pretty woman, I never saw her before; and there was a Captain Baines, and one or two others; and Mrs.

Maxwell seemed rather shy of us; somehow, it was rather flat, and, as we came away, I did say to Lavinia that I wished we had seen you there instead of that beautiful statue. Not but what Mrs. Maxwell was civil enough, and she laughed when I said the wife was a rival to the beautiful ram, or something pretty of that sort. Colonel Maxwell does seem uncommonly fond of her, I must say that."

" You may call it shyness, Bob," said Miss Law; " but I say that she gives herself airs. Did you hear her ask Mrs. Denham if she had ever been in Italy?—just to show where she came from. I am sure I wondered you did not ask her in return if she had ever been in America."

" Well, Lavinia, I am not so sharp as you, and I dare say, after all, we shall like Mrs. Maxwell very much. I think she seems to be shy, and not much of a talker, but that will improve. We shall be having them to dinner one of these days, and, I suppose, you will like to come, Miss Villars, and meet your old friend. Do you remember our dinner in the

autumn? You seemed to enjoy it amazingly. Ah! you need not blush about it; we will have just such another; and I will pick up somebody for you; that Captain Baines seemed a monstrous good fellow, I will call upon him one of these days; and Wingfield, do you know he was uncommonly smitten with you, Miss Villars!"

"Really, Bob, you talk such nonsense, I am quite ashamed to hear you." Bob winked to Evelyn. "If Mr. Villars is not to be found, we had better be going."

"Can I give any message to papa?" asked Evelyn, as her visitors rose.

"No, thank you, Miss Villars. I must come again. It is very serious about this rain; all the springs are dry, and the glass as steady as it was three weeks ago."

"I say, Evelyn," said Henry, as the door closed, "I hope you won't let what that woman says prejudice you against Clarice Melville—Mrs. Maxwell, I mean."

"Oh, no, Henry! I know Clarice too well, and I am afraid Miss Law's dislikes make very little impression upon me."

“ Well, I am glad of that. I wish you to like her. I say, Evelyn,” he continued, moving rather restlessly about the room, “ did it ever strike you that I am in love with her?”

“ You, Henry!—oh, no!” said Evelyn, in some excitement.

“ Ah! but I am, though—that is, I was. I met her, you know, last year, and she almost drove me mad, till I did not know whether I loved or hated her. You might as well have talked of love to a piece of stone. I never saw a woman so utterly without feeling as she was then.”

Evelyn made no answer, but her heart sunk within her. Henry, too! Must every one love Clarice? Not that she had ever thought that Henry, in such a sense, loved *her*, neither thought nor wished it; but she had hoped and felt certain, too, that he loved no other, that she was his first object—the person he confided in, and was most interested in on earth.

“ I came down here to see her, Evelyn; perhaps you wondered why I came so suddenly. I came to see her once again before I forgot

her for ever—to see, too, if she could love that fellow, Maxwell."

"Are you going, then, to Redlynch?" said Evelyn, in an unconsciously sad voice, but the change was unnoticed by Henry.

"I have been there; I went the day before yesterday, and I saw her, Evelyn—and she does love him. I saw that, and so there is an end of it. When I first went in, she was alone, and she was as calm and sedate as I saw her in Italy; but then he came in, and she blushed and smiled, such a blush as would have driven me mad, if it had been for me, and looked up at him with her beautiful eyes. Well, never mind, it's all over now;" and he sighed.

"Are you unhappy now, then?" asked Evelyn.

"Oh, no! not now—I don't care a stick about her now, if she can love that man. But it was strange—was it not, Evelyn?—the dislike I took to Colonel Maxwell the first day at Redlynch? Do you remember? I shall always know, in future, that there is a good

reason, if I hate a man. Well, now I shall go out riding."

"What a very unsatisfactory world this is, Miss Drake!" said Evelyn, that afternoon, as she walked with her governess. "It seems to me, that there is nothing but disappointment."

"Do you think so, my dear? I never have found it so."

"Haven't you, Miss Drake?" said Evelyn, with surprise; for she had been in the habit of often thinking, with pity, on the "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable" life of her governess. "Perhaps, then, you have no wishes."

"I wish to do my duty, my dear, and I know that disappointment in that must depend upon myself."

"Don't you care if nobody loves you?" said Evelyn, with tears in her eyes. "I do, and nobody loves me—nobody, Miss Drake!"

"My dear, how can you say so? There is your papa, and Mr. Harcourt, and Mr. Egerton, and myself, besides many others, who love you very dearly."

“ Ah ! but they don’t love me best. Papa likes many things better than me ; and Mr. Harcourt likes Juliet ; and Henry.....and even you, Miss Drake, you like your mother and sisters better than you like me.”

“ But this, my dear, is very common indeed. I know, for myself, that no one likes me best. My sisters have husbands and children, and my brother has a wife, and I never was a favourite with my mother, and yet I am fifty years old—fifty to-day, Evelyn—and am quite happy.”

“ But I could not, Miss Drake, live till fifty with no one to care for me—I had rather die,” she said, passionately.

Miss Drake was not well fitted to minister to a mind diseased. Calm and equable herself, she did not dream of the passionate hopes and fears that could agitate a young heart like Evelyn’s.

“ You speak foolishly, my dear,” she said, “and wrongly, too. We can always live and be happy in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call us.”

Evelyn was silent, and wandered on for some time, musing over the gloomy thoughts which her conversation with Miss Drake had excited.

“ I wish Mr. Harcourt was here,” she said at last. “ I wish he always lived here; don’t you, Miss Drake ?”

“ Yes, indeed, my dear, I should be very glad to have him and Miss Juliet always with us.”

CHAPTER XXI.

And ruder words will soon break in,
To swell the breach that words begin.

MOORE.

It was an oppressive August day. Perhaps, the heat of the sun, as she drove over the unsheltered heath that lay between Brook Lawn and Redlynch, had contributed to Miss Law's ill-humour; certain it is that her mood of mind was none of the sweetest, as she entered Mrs. Maxwell's drawing-room.

Morning visitors were one of Clarice's great trials. Naturally shy, or rather retiring than shy, in her manner, the secluded life which she had led in Italy, while it gave her little opportunity for it, had rather added to the difficulty which she felt in general conversation; and the number of neighbours who had

visited her from the populous country that on every side surrounded Redlynch, had at first filled her with terror. But she was not one to shrink from any thing that came in the way of duty ; and, having once seen that it was inevitable, she did her best to please and entertain those who sought her out, and with the greatest number her efforts were successful. Her beauty prepossessed—a young bride's timidity was universally allowed to be excusable—and her sweet voice and gentle manners won the hearts even of those who wished that the new Mrs. Maxwell was a little more of a talker.

But with Miss Law the task was more difficult. Clarice shrunk from her flatteries to herself and Colonel Maxwell, and from the bitter tone of her conversation with respect to the neighbourhood in general—and this day, Colonel Maxwell and Mr. Law having departed to look at the cattle, she found herself, at the end of three quarters of an hour, sorely perplexed how to entertain her guest.

“ If you are not tired, Miss Law,” she said

at last, “ perhaps you would come into the garden ; there is a pretty walk near the house, which is very cool and shady.”

“ With great pleasure,” replied Miss Law ; “ your beautiful garden is always an inducement to tempt me out of doors.”

“ It was about this time last year, or perhaps a month or three weeks later,” continued she, as they left the house, “ that I saw Redlynch for the first time. Did Colonel Maxwell ever tell you of our very inopportune visit here ?”

“ No ;” replied Clarice.

“ Indeed ! I should have thought it had made more impression upon his mind. We came here, a small party from Wilmington, to see the place, supposing it to be up for sale ; and my brother led us through the place, till he brought us in a very familiar, and, I fear, impertinent way, up the steps of the terrace, and there was Colonel Maxwell, seated, drawing, sketching the house, I believe ; and then we discovered that he had been the possessor of the place for a week.

Of course, we apologized duly for our uncere-
monious visit—that is, Miss Villars did, in our
name; and the apology was most graciously
received. And then began,” continued Miss
Law, with a glance at Clarice, for it suddenly
struck her that she had found a way of
wounding her calm and quiet companion—
“ then began Colonel Maxwell’s admiration of
Miss Villars.”

Clarice looked up with a little surprise, and
was going to answer, when Miss Law contin-
ued, with a smile—

“ Did you not know that Miss Villars was
Colonel Maxwell’s first love?”

“ Every one must admire her,” said Clarice,
quietly. “ I always think that her face is
more really beautiful than any thing in the
world. I could watch her countenance for
ever.”

“ You and Colonel Maxwell are quite alike,
then,” persisted Miss Law; “ he used to watch
her for a whole evening. Indeed it was, I will not
say a disappointment,” she continued, graci-
ously, “ for none could call it so who are happy

enough to visit Redlynch now; but it was a surprise to the whole country when his marriage was announced—we all believed there was or would soon be an engagement; but we were wrong, happily wrong—none could wish it otherwise than it now is."

Clarice had blushed slightly, very slightly at her words, and a feeling of surprise and curiosity rose in her mind, but she made no remark upon the communication, and they walked on in silence.

"I think I heard your brother's voice," she said, at length. "Shall we go and meet him and Colonel Maxwell?"

Colonel Maxwell and Mr. Law soon approached them; and after Bob had apologized for the length of the visit, and lifted up his hands and eyes at the beauty of the cattle and the crops, and complimented Mrs. Maxwell on her own good looks, and the good looks of the garden, saying that he thought every thing flourished at Redlynch, the brother and sister took leave.

"I am afraid you have had a tedious visit,

Clarice," said her husband, " and I am very sorry to have been the cause of it; but when once Bob Law gets among the cattle there is no drawing him away, and he is such a good-natured fellow, that I cannot help indulging him."

" Pray, never think of me," said Clarice; " it is good practice for me, for I am afraid as yet I am but a bad hand at entertaining. And I have been hearing news to-day," she continued, looking up in his face and smiling. " Miss Law has been talking of you."

" Indeed!" he said, with a sudden pang of fear; " what has she been good enough to say of me?"

" She was telling me about you and Miss Villars, George; she seems to think...."

At Evelyn's name, Colonel Maxwell turned from her, and began picking a few roses from a bush near which he stood—a moment afterwards he gave her the flowers, and, as he did so, said gravely,

" Never listen, Clarice, to Miss Law's stories; I warn you that she does mischief.

But, come this way," he continued, in his natural manner. "I want to show you an improvement, which has just struck me, on the side of the house."

While engaged with her husband, the subject passed from Clarice's mind; but while she was dressing she found herself recurring to it, and dwelling on it as something strange. There came to her mind the embarrassment of Evelyn's manner on their first meeting, and, since that time, in her visits at Redlynch, sudden coldnesses and constraints, which had often struck Clarice, but which, being unable to explain, she looked upon either as a fancy of her own, or a caprice in Evelyn. While dwelling on her husband's manner and Miss Law's conversation, the idea flashed across her mind, that perhaps, while he thought not of it, Evelyn had learnt to love Colonel Maxwell, and that he had become conscious of her feelings. "I should be very sorry if this were the case," mused Clarice. "Poor Evelyn! I shall hardly like to beg her to come here again."

As they sate at dessert, her mind reverted to the subject; suddenly looking inquiringly at her husband, she asked,

“Did you know Evelyn Villars very well, George? I don’t know why, but it was a surprise to me to think that you did.”

The table was drawn into a large open bow window, and the light of a brilliant sunset fell full on Colonel Maxwell’s face. In spite of his utmost efforts, he changed colour, and replied shortly,

“Yes, I knew her very well—as well as one can, at least, in an acquaintance of three weeks or so. You are very curious, Clarice.”

Something unusual in the tone of his answer struck, and struck painfully, on Clarice’s heart—gently, almost apologizingly, she said,

“I only asked, George, because I have several times noticed that Evelyn does not appear to be quite at her ease, when she comes here, and I was anxious—” She paused, surprised at the heightened colour and angry expression of her husband’s countenance.

“Pray, don’t take to foolish fancies, Clarice!—you are as bad as Miss Law herself.”

The words were nothing; but his internal struggle gave to his manner a harshness of which he was hardly conscious.

Clarice bent down her eyes, and a faint blush passed over her cheek; it was the first harsh word he had ever spoken, and the uncommon devotion of his usual manner made it stand out in striking and painful relief. Angry with herself for the degree of emotion which it caused her, she got up, put her head out of the window, and gathered a sprig of the jessamine that was peeping in; when she turned again, her face was calm as ever.

“It is so fine, George—do let us walk,” she said. Silently he followed her into the garden.

Few and slight were the words that had been spoken, but they left a sting behind.

CHAPTER XXII.

A something light as air, a look,
A word unkind or wrongly taken;
Oh ! Love, that tempests never shook,
A word, a breath, like this has shaken !

MOORE.

A shadow had fallen on Mrs. Maxwell's heart—a cloud had gathered upon her happy home; imperceptibly the change had come, but there was a change.

Either the necessity of concealment, or the fear that suspicion was already excited in Clarice's mind, had given a constraint to Colonel Maxwell's manner—had set bounds to what once had seemed the fearless confidence that existed between them. Subjects suddenly appeared to be forbidden; his lonely walks and rides increased; the business of his estate suddenly appeared to become over-

whelming ; more than all, the continual warfare in which he lived, between his intense desire to confess and release himself from the growing nightmare of discovery, and the cowardice which withheld him, gave an unwonted irritation to his words and his manner.

And Clarice felt, and painfully felt, the change ; it was not that he loved her less, she did not fear that ; he watched her unceasingly —with the tenderest solicitude, watched over her health, her wishes, her pleasures ; but still, when they were together, there was constraint on his side, timidity on hers. At first, she would not see it ; then she thought she must be too *exigeante*—that she could not expect that he would always be what he had been to her in the first days of their union ; and, with the submission natural to her disposition, she endeavoured to reconcile herself to the idea. But this delusion could not last : it was not his absence she felt so severely—it was the want of his confidence ; and soon, very soon, she fixed on that particular day of Miss Law's call as the beginning of the evil—soon,

very soon, decided that there must be some mystery, in which Evelyn was concerned, which was the cause of her unhappiness; and, having considered with herself that it was not idle curiosity that made her speak, she determined to break the painful silence.

It was about a fortnight or three weeks after Miss Law's call. They sate together in the evening, and Clarice put a letter into her husband's hands. It was one she had just received from Evelyn, begging her to go to Wilmington the following day.

Colonel Maxwell read it, then laid it down in silence, and took up a newspaper that lay on the table.

“George,” said Clarice, gently, “why is this—I must ask you—why is Evelyn's name almost forbidden between us now?”

He did not answer, and she went on earnestly.

“You must not think that it is foolish curiosity that makes me speak; but we are not so happy as we were—you must see it, George; and if it was only for myself, I would

not speak—I would not annoy you; but you yourself are not happy! and why is it? Why should there be this silence—this distrust?"

He was still silent—he felt the moment was come when concealment was impossible, unless at the sacrifice of all happiness between them, and he was struggling with the cowardice of his heart.

Clarice spoke again. "You do not think," she said, still more earnestly, "that I could be so foolish as to be angry or jealous, if I heard that you had loved Evelyn Villars last year, before you loved me. I know you love me now; if all the world said the contrary, it could not move me! I feel you love me, and is not that enough? Dear George, do speak!"

"Yes, Clarice," he said, calmly, "since you will have it, I will speak now, and you shall scorn your husband. I loved Evelyn Villars last year. I was engaged to her when I first saw you—when I married you, Clarice! I received this letter from her three weeks after our marriage, at Venice. Read it—and now you know what I am!"

He took a case from his pocket, and put into her hands a letter from Evelyn.

Clarice's face had flushed deeply, then became very pale, and she trembled as she took the letter from his hand. Her eye glanced over the following words:—

“ I return you this ring, which I have no longer the right, or the wish, to keep. I trust that you and dear Clarice will be happy always together.

“ EVELYN VILLARS.”

“ Poor Evelyn !” she said, as she gave him back the letter, and a silence followed.

“ Clarice, why don't you speak ?” he said, in great agitation. “ Tell me that you hate me—that you scorn me—what you will—only speak, or look at me, at least !”

She raised her face, pale and sad indeed, but with an expression of the deepest love and pity. “ I was going to thank you, George,” she said, “ for your confidence in me; it is not, indeed it is not, misplaced !” and her voice trembled as she spoke.

“ And what do you think of me, Clarice?—do you utterly, utterly condemn? Yes,” he continued, fixing his eyes on her angel face, “ I know that you must. I am sunk—oh, how sunk!—in your eyes. You can never love me again.”

“ Oh, George! why do you judge so harshly of me! I will not say,” and she turned her face full upon him, “ that I do not condemn ; you know what you have done, and you would not wish yourself that love should so blind my eyes, that I should not see clearly where sin lies. Should we not speak the truth to each other, George? But can this change the love that we have felt—that we have sworn! Will not this confidence make it more than ever?” And again her eyes rested upon him, with their intense expression of love, and truth, and purity. Her husband seemed to shrink before them ; he covered his eyes with his hands.

“ Now, Clarice, yes, now I feel what I am ! Ah, Evelyn! you are indeed avenged !”

A change came over Mrs. Maxwell's mind. She did not love her husband less; nay, perhaps the interest and pity with which she regarded him had deepened the intensity of her feeling, but the perfect peace of her love was gone. She had looked up to him as to a superior being, and the repose of that devotion was gone. No love, no sophistry, could blind her eyes as to what he had done—it lay as a weight upon her heart, and she watched him now, and looked on into the future, with an almost fearful degree of interest. The weakness of principle which had so betrayed itself—would it end there?

They were happy again, but it was not perfect happiness. Colonel Maxwell even yet distrusted the love of his wife. If she was silent, his conscience said she thought of him. If she looked paler than usual, it said she had mourned for him. If her eyes rested, with their deep love, upon his face, it said that pity, not love, prompted her tenderness. They were happy, but perfect happiness was gone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It is no dream, and I am desolate.

BYRON.

It was again Christmas-day at Wilmington, and the usual visitors were assembled there.

It was a soft, mild day—a pause after a storm—and, as the whole party walked home from church, the sun was shining with almost the warmth of summer. As they were entering the house, Henry Egerton pulled Evelyn back into the garden.

“It is a shame to go in, Evelyn; come and walk with me.”

She complied, and they walked along, but, unusually for Henry, in silence.

Suddenly, he looked at her with a kind of smile. “I wish you would be my wife, Evelyn!”

She stared with wonder.

“ I mean what I say, Evelyn ; I wish you would be my wife ! ” and he looked anxiously, earnestly, in her face.

“ Are you gone quite mad, Henry ! ” exclaimed Evelyn, looking up in great astonishment.

“ Why should I be mad ? Ah ! I see how it is, Evelyn, you don’t believe me, because I don’t make speeches and rant about love ; but I never shall do that again—I did it once. But, dear Evelyn, I really love you better than anybody in the world—better than my mother—better, far better, than Clarice, and I wish you would be my wife ; we would be very happy.”

“ I am very sorry, Henry,” said Evelyn, “ indeed I am ; but I really don’t love you well enough.”

“ Oh, yes, you do ! You know me better than anybody, and you know that I have loved you all my life ; and I know you, and I know that you are the best and nicest girl in the world, and this is a great deal better than

nonsense about love. Dear Evelyn, it would make me so very happy."

For a moment, a strong temptation came over Evelyn to say Yes. She had so wished, so longed, that somebody should love her, and care for her, that she scarcely could resist the tone of tenderness in which he addressed her. But it was but a moment; her heart was so clear and simple, and its impulses so true, that she was rarely led astray. She knew that she did love Henry better than almost any one, but she felt that she could love much more, and felt, too, that her own restless heart required something far different from Henry to lean upon.

He watched her debate anxiously; it was but a few moments, and then she spoke decidedly.

"No, Henry, I must not say Yes. I do love you better than almost any one, but I don't love you enough for *that*, and never can. I am very sorry, dear Henry, and I feel so very, very grateful to you for thinking of me, and it has made me quite happy to think that

any one could really care for me." And tears came into her eyes; "but I could not marry you—I ought not."

"You don't mean to say, Evelyn, that you are going to live single for that fellow, Maxwell's sake?"

"Henry!" said Evelyn, indignantly, "you do not suppose that I am so wicked as to think of him now; oh! no," she continued, with her simple manner, "I hope I shall marry some day, because I should like very much to have somebody who would really care for me; but then I must love and *respect* before I can marry."

"And I suppose you mean to say that you don't respect me?"

"No, Henry, not very much," she said, with an affectionate smile.

"Well, Evelyn, you may be right, and I don't love you the less for what you have said, for indeed I do love you, dear Evelyn. I like your truth and your openness; one may always depend upon you. But it can't be helped; we must try and be happy as we were before.

Come along, there's the luncheon-bell, I suppose we had better go in." And they walked amicably together into the dining-room. Henry sate down with his usual manner and appetite, and Evelyn....her cheek was brighter, and her eye sparkled more than it had done for many a day ; a weight was lifted off her heart—it was possible then that she should be loved — loved well enough even to be chosen for a wife.

They sate together in the evening. There was a shade of melancholy in Henry's manner, for he was disappointed ; of late he had often pictured to himself the time when Evelyn would be his wife, but he had no wish to work upon her feelings, and he was talking as usual.

" Have you seen Mrs. Maxwell lately, Evelyn ?" he asked.

" No, not for a month or more ; it is a long drive, you know, and one of the horses has been lame ; it is well now, however, and papa says I may have the carriage any day I like. Colonel Maxwell does not allow Clarice to drive so far in the cold weather, so that if I

see her I must go there, and I hope I shall in a day or two."

" You like her, don't you, Evelyn?"

" Oh! yes, better than any thing, though she is very different from me—she is so very good, it almost frightens me to look at her; but I like goodness now, I do indeed, Henry, though I am bad enough myself."

" Mrs. Maxwell is happy, is she not?"

" Yes, I think so; but she has not high spirits; latterly, perhaps it was fancy, but I thought she seemed graver than at first, but....Was that the door-bell?— who can it be?" And Evelyn looked anxiously round the room.

It was the door-bell, and was rung a second time louder than before. A servant came in in a few minutes, and said that a person wished to speak to Mr. Villars. He got up and left the room. Everybody sate in silence. Mr. Villars soon came back and took Mr. Harcourt aside, then called Evelyn.

" It was a servant from Redlynch, Evelyn. Mrs. Maxwell, it appears, has had a son, and is

very ill, and wishes to see you, but it is such a dreadful night."

"Clarice ill! Oh! papa, let me go!"

"Here is a note for you, Evelyn. It is a strange time of night, but I suppose you must go."

It was a few almost illegible lines from Colonel Maxwell, telling her that Clarice was dangerously ill, and imploring her to come. She put it into her father's hand.

"I must go, indeed, papa; I must, directly."

"Well, go and get ready; I did order the carriage, and I will go with you. I never thought," he continued, turning to Mr. Harcourt as she hurried away, "that I should set foot in that man's house again, but death changes all things. I fear, from what the servant says, that there is little hope for that poor girl's life."

It was past twelve, when they arrived at Redlynch; a chaise and four was at the door; a physician who had just arrived from a distance, sent for in Colonel Maxwell's despair. The house was silent and deserted; one servant

showed Mr. Villars into the drawing-room, then begged Evelyn to follow him up stairs. He pointed to a door, from which there came a bright light, and went quietly down again. Evelyn entered timidly. By the fire sate a young girl, with a frightened, startled expression of countenance, and on her knees, unthought-of and neglected, lay the earnestly-desired, the anxiously-expected heir of the Maxwells.

“ How is Mrs. Maxwell ? ” said Evelyn, gently.

“ I don’t know, ma’am,” said the girl, in the same frightened manner ; “ I believe she is very ill—I dare say somebody will come soon ; won’t you sit down, ma’am ? ”

Evelyn sat down opposite to her, and nearly a quarter of an hour passed — a man then went quickly through the room — it was the newly-arrived physician hurrying away. A moment afterwards Colonel Maxwell appeared. His hair was in disorder, his face pale and stupefied, and he walked like one in a dream ; he had reached the door without seeing Evelyn ;

but, turning again as if unconscious where he would go, he saw her and went hastily towards her.

“ You are come, then ; Clarice has so longed to see you ! Oh ! Evelyn, can you not save her ? ” And, laying his hand on her arm, he drew her to the door of Clarice’s room. Leaving her for a moment, he spoke to Clarice and to the nurse, and several people left the bedside : he then came back to Evelyn.

“ She has just revived — go to her, Miss Villars, she expects you,” and, grasping her hand, he turned away.

“ Clarice ! ” said Evelyn in a low voice, as with tearful eyes she bent over the bed and pressed her lips on her cold forehead.

“ Are you come at last, Evelyn ? ” she said. “ I have wished so much to see you once more.”

“ Oh ! Clarice, are you indeed so ill ! ”

“ I knew it would be thus, Evelyn ; I have long felt that it would be thus, and I have tried to prepare myself for this hour, and it is come, and it is a bitter trial. Poor George ! I shrink from leaving him alone ! It was this

I wished to say, Evelyn,—often and often I have longed to ask you, but could not—have you forgiven him ?”

“ Forgiven, Clarice ?”

“ Yes, Evelyn, I know all—he told me all; let me hear you say that you have forgiven him.”

“ Oh ! yes, Clarice, long, long—you may, you must believe me !”

“ Thank you, thank you,” she said, and was silent. “ Evelyn,” she then continued earnestly, “ when I am gone from his home, will you come and see him, and tell him how I loved him, and how hard it was to me to leave him here—he does not know, he cannot know, how I have loved him—too much, too much!—but he will believe it from your lips, and it will comfort him, when he is....” She stopped, and a tear fell down her cold cheek. “ Will you promise me this, dear Evelyn?—is it asking too much for him ?”

“ I will, indeed,” said Evelyn, earnestly; “ I will do all I can to comfort him; but Clarice, must it be, must you die ?”

“ Soon, very soon, Evelyn ; but I die happier now. You must not think,” she continued, looking anxiously in Evelyn’s face, “ that it is for myself that I am unwilling to leave this world — you must not think that I repine at the will of God ; it is but sorrow to leave him alone—a fear—a dread ; but even this is wrong. Dear Evelyn, will you sometimes think of him and of my child ?”

“ I never shall forget you, Clarice, and all whom you have loved I shall ever love ;” and the tears fell like rain from Evelyn’s eyes as she spoke.

“ Then now, dear Evelyn, good-bye, and God bless you ! You will be happy yet, dearest, in this world ! I cannot speak more.”

Evelyn bent over her and kissed her. “ It was a wild night to bring you out,” Clarice faintly said, while a smile passed over her face ; “ but I could not wait till to-morrow.”

Colonel Maxwell waited for her in the next room, pressed her hand as she passed, and hastened to his dying wife.

Their words, the last, last words of those who had loved as few have loved, who should dare to tell?

When the faint misty December morning dawned, Clarice Maxwell closed her eyes for ever upon the world!

CHAPTER XXIV.

There is a grief that does not feel,
It leaves a wound that cannot heal ;
The heart grows cold ; it feels not then ;
When will it cease to feel again !

MONTGOMERY.

Evelyn dared not intrude upon the first days of Colonel Maxwell's grief ; but the day after the funeral she set off with Miss Drake for Redlynch.

The house was all opened, a clear frosty sun shone brightly on the place, everything was as it had been : a fortnight before the beautiful bride had been there in health, and strength, and happiness, and still all was the same without—how changed within !

They were shown into the drawing-room, and Evelyn gave a note to be taken to Colonel Maxwell.

The servant returned, led her up stairs, and opened silently the door of Clarice's sitting-room ; then closed it, and left her there alone.

And there too the sun shone brightly on the room. Everything was as it had been left ten days before : an unfinished drawing was on the table—a work-frame, with a few worsteds upon it, was laid on a low stool in the recess of the window—several books lay on the sofa—one, half opened, as if but that moment laid down. All spoke of Clarice ; and Evelyn sate down dreaming, doubting, so true was the dream, so strange the reality !

In a few minutes Colonel Maxwell came in by another door that opened from his own room. Evelyn almost started at his appearance — the alteration seemed impossible to have been the work of one short week. His cheek was pale and sunken ; his tall, upright figure was bent and drooping, and his eyes, he large eyes which had given the greatest beauty to his face, had a pale, sleepless, haggard look, which affected her far more than the traces of tears to look upon.

He shook hands with Evelyn, and sate down by her in silence.

“I should not have ventured to come,” she said, in a timid, trembling voice, “but I promised.”

“It is very kind of you,” he said, and again they relapsed into silence.

Evelyn looked at him with tears in her eyes; he sat so utterly without strength, without energy, beside her. “I wish that I could comfort you,” she exclaimed, at last.

“Comfort!” he said; “what could comfort me? I blighted her life—I destroyed her happiness—perhaps her health; and now she has left me alone for ever!”

“Not blighted her life—not destroyed her happiness!” said Evelyn, earnestly. “I am come to you now from her to tell you that you never knew how she loved you, or how hard she found it to leave you. She said she loved you too much; then, in her dying hour, she said it.”

Colonel Maxwell looked at her with a

softened expression for a moment, but it passed again. "Yes, she loved me," he said, "she loved me, and yet I cast a blight over her life, a cloud upon her spirit. I, who so loved her, that for her sake I made myself what I abhor, and would have done it again; and now I am alone. Evelyn, do you know what it is to despair? Clarice!" he said, raising his head, in a voice so hollow, so piercing, that Evelyn shuddered as she heard it.

"Oh! Colonel Maxwell, you must not speak like this; it is wrong indeed; it would grieve Clarice—it must grieve her now if she still can see you."

"Wrong!" he said, interrupting her; "no, Evelyn—I am not rebellious; I say that it is just, most just; I deserve it should be thus. I resign myself to my despair."

"But would Clarice speak like this?" said Evelyn, earnestly. She could not answer him—she scarcely knew where he was wrong; but she felt that Clarice would not have spoken thus.

He got up and walked to the window without answering—opened it, then hastily closed it, as if the fresh, clear air was painful to him. Evelyn's heart longed to comfort him; his wretchedness almost terrified her; she followed him, and approached him with tears in her eyes.

“How is your little child?” she said, gently attempting to turn and soften his mind.

“He is well, thank you,” he replied, languidly.

“Have you seen him to-day? I should so much like to see him!” continued Evelyn.

“No, not to-day,” he said, with a sigh.

“Do you not love him, then?”

He was silent.

“Oh! Colonel Maxwell,” said Evelyn, earnestly, “you must love him; he has none but you to love him, and it is so desolate not to be loved!”

“You are right,” he said; “it *is* desolate not to be loved;” and, for the first time, something like a tear glistened in his eye. “Will

“ you come?” he said, gently. “ I will show you my child.”

He took her to the nursery, where the child lay, ready dressed for exhibition; for the nurse had heard that a lady was in the house, and naturally supposed that the baby would be the first object of interest.

Evelyn took it in her arms.

“ Is it like Clarice?” asked Colonel Maxwell, anxiously, in a low voice.

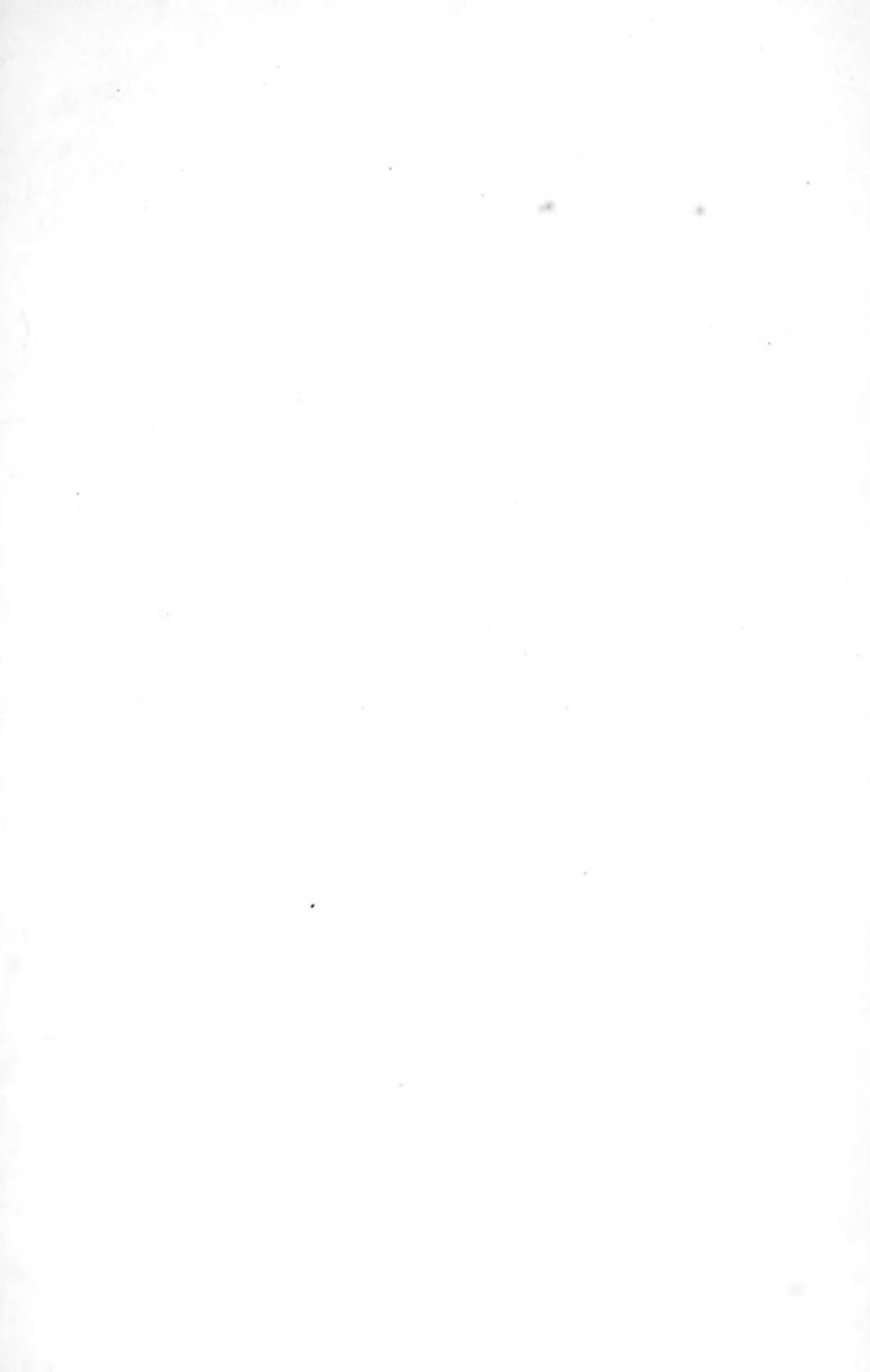
The nurse distinguished part of the question; and, taking back the child from Evelyn, replied, as she waved it in the air, “ He’s as like his papa as he can be; yes, he’s as like his own papa as ever he can be—he is, he is, he is! Poor little sing! poor little sing,” &c.

As they left the room, Evelyn put out her hand to wish Colonel Maxwell good bye; but he signed to her to follow him.

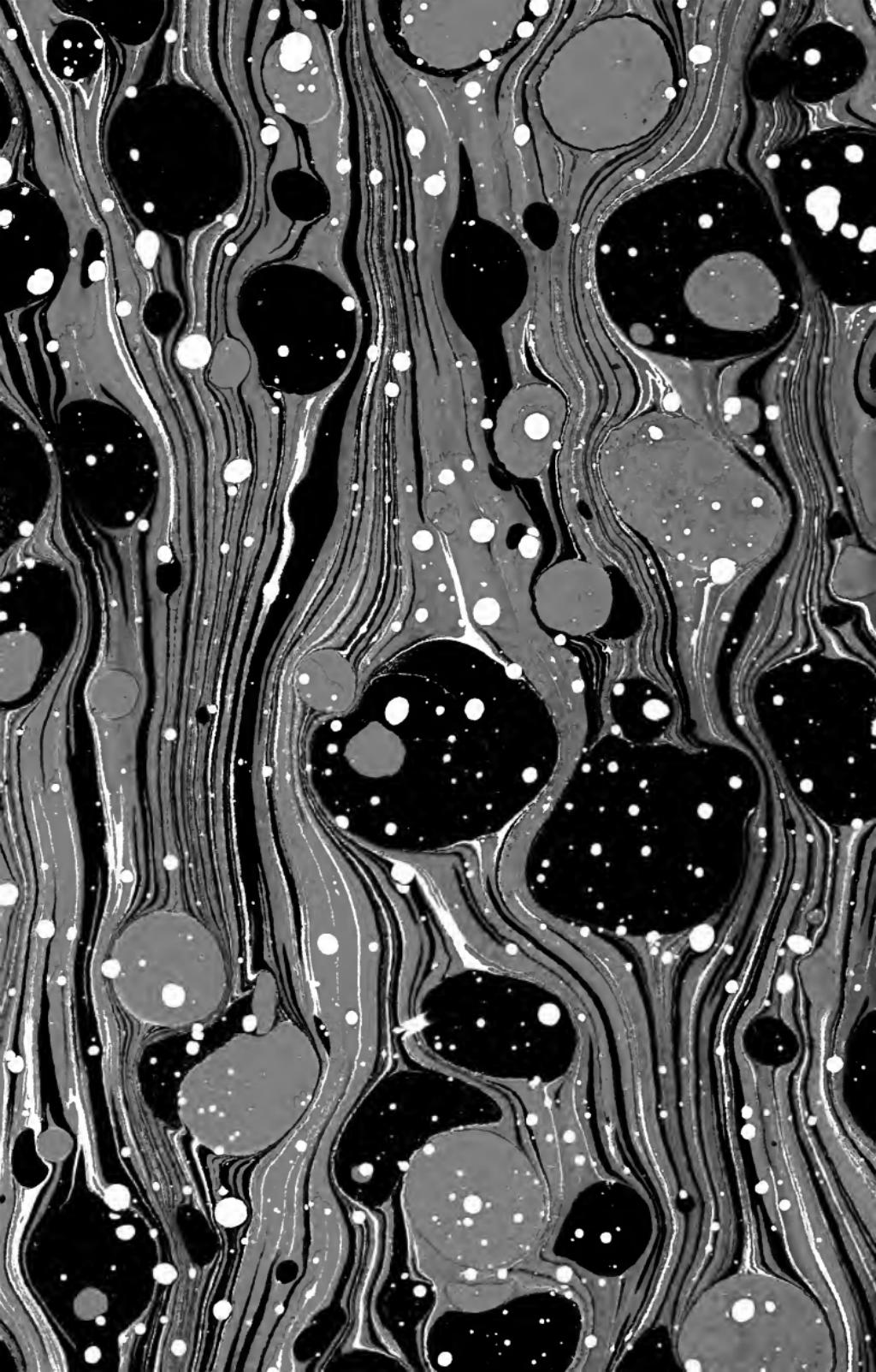
“ You must not think, Miss Villars,” he said, as they stood again in Clarice’s room, “ that I do not thank you for coming. I feel it but too deeply, but I dare not thank you. Let

this," he continued, with a melancholy smile, "show you what I feel; it is now my most precious thing on earth!" Opening a drawer, he took from it one of Clarice's beautiful, long, golden curls, pressed her hand as he gave it to her, and left her. And, slowly and sadly, Evelyn departed from Redlynch.

END OF VOL. II.









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